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THE AGE OF FAITH

BY

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ENGLAND," "HEREDITY AND CHRISTIAN
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REVELATION," ETC.



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TO THE
REV. JAMES H. ECOB, D. D.

MY DEAR ECOB:—

For more years than I care to enumerate here we have been friends. We have studied together, worked together, traveled together. In your writings I first found the phrase, "Interpret God by his Fatherhood." Therefore, without asking your permission, I venture to write your name in this book, not knowing, nor caring very much, whether you will approve, so long as I have the opportunity of acknowledging my obligation to you, and my love and admiration for you.

Very sincerely yours,

AMORY H. BRADFORD.



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INTRODUCTION

THIS is an age of faith. This book is an effort to state some of the truths which most need emphasis in such an age.

The days of authority are gone. No one any longer believes anything simply because it was formerly believed. "Is it reasonable?" Even revelation is brought to this test. The truth for an age of faith above all other things must be reasonable. Whatever contradicts reason and the moral sense cannot be of God. Whatever harmonizes with reason and the moral sense presumptively is true.

Among the subjects which need emphasis in a time of inquiry, moral earnestness, and eagerness to believe whatever is approved by the intelligence and conscience, I venture to give a prominent place to the following: The Personality of God, The Fatherhood of God, and the fact that all theories about God, man, and the universe should be interpreted in the light of the Fatherhood. These furnish a sure basis for optimism; they show that the brotherhood of man is universal and vital; that suffering and sorrow are means in the hands of

love for the perfection of human character, and indispensable to human progress ; that sin is an incident in the upward movement of the race, not necessary, but always possible ; that salvation is the sure purpose of omnipotent love ; that prayer is the natural and necessary intercourse between parent and child ; that what is called punishment is always disciplinary, and intended to restore ; and that the deathless life follows of necessity because man is of the same nature as God, and, therefore, must partake of His immortality.

But all human interpretations would be fallible and uncertain, however true the principle on which they were based, unless there was an infallible guide. That infallible guide Jesus promised, and the ages are realizing, in the person of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth who will lead into all truth and show things to come. Christians are disciples of the Spirit of Truth, and they wait reverently and expectantly for the disclosures of the future, while they honor and trust the revelations of the past.

These are some of the truths which require emphasis in an age of faith.

THE AGE OF FAITH

I

THE AGE OF FAITH

IN attempting to estimate the characteristics of an age, there is always the danger that eddies in the current of thought and life will be confused with the river, and that incidents in history will be studied as if they were important events.

The time in which we live has been called an "Age of Doubt," and the eminence of the authority has led not a few to believe that the characterization is accurate. A narrow induction of facts may lead to that conclusion, but more thorough study and wider knowledge will result in a different conclusion. Instead of being an age of doubt, in comparison with other times, this is an age of faith.

Of course much depends on definitions. If by faith is meant such assurance as results from demonstration, or if it is held to signify belief unsupported by reasonable evidence,

What is
Faith?

then this is not a period of faith. But if faith is willingness to act on evidence which the senses cannot verify because "the passional motives," to use the words of Professor James, issue their command, then in no other age of the world's history has faith played a more prominent part. By it I understand willingness to follow the intuitions, the spontaneous convictions, the affirmations of the heart, always with good reason, but without waiting for the intellect to be convinced. Faith is willingness to act where duty calls, but where sight is impossible. < For instance, I believe in God, not because His being can be demonstrated, but because my heart hungers for Him, and only the hypothesis of His existence explains the mysteries of our mortal life or justifies the presence of man on the earth. >

The Age of Faith. He who reads French, Italian, and indeed much of German literature, may easily imagine that pessimism is the dominant note of modern thought; but French novels are not the world's literature, and a few German pessimists are neither the expounders of all the world's philosophy nor its best representatives. < We see what we try to see. > It is not difficult for earnest souls to get beneath the surface of life, and become acquainted with its deeper principles and inner forces. Such are never entirely without faith.

Defining faith as willingness to act on intuitions, or convictions of what is true and right, not because they have been proven, but because the whole man asserts that they ought to be true, I find that it is so widespread and so predominant as to justify me in calling this an age of faith. But a statement so far-reaching, and so unlike the views which have been popular, requires more than affirmation; it needs justification.

Few persons feel more keenly than I the baleful influence of current skepticism. One must be blind not to see that it has infected the well-to-do classes, penetrated schools and colleges, and found its way even into factories, and clubs for working men and women. This I fully recognize and sadly confess — but this is by no means all that a study of our time discloses.

Let us begin in the field where doubt is often supposed to hold undisputed sway. Here Science and Faith. we must observe that doubt and inquiry are not synonymous terms. The impression prevails that science, in taking nothing for granted and daring to ask questions concerning all beliefs sacred in the past, cultivates doubt. Exactly the opposite is true. The fundamental assumption of science is that something is real, and that that reality may be discerned. No man would spend his life in wearisome investigations if he were con-

vinced that, as the result of his labors, he would be left in the same darkness in which he began them. The scientist is of necessity a man of faith. He searches for something in which he believes, although for him, when he begins, the object of his quest has only imaginary existence. Faith, as an intellectual attitude, is the same whether it affirms the law of evolution or the being of God. Darwin used faith as truly as Paul. They had the same mental attitude, although their minds were directed to different objects. An astronomer turns his telescope toward some part of the heavens, not because he has ever seen a planet in that field, but because the perturbations of another planet have led him to believe that if he searches long enough there his efforts will be rewarded.

The scientific spirit distinguishes our time. Science is the affirmation by faith of an undiscovered but discernible reality.

Twenty-five years ago, Professor Tyndall found in matter the promise and potency of all life. In the year 1898 Sir William Crookes, speaking from the same position as that occupied by Tyndall, declared that to-day science finds in life the promise and potency of all the material universe; and he further said that the difference between his statement and Huxley's marks the progress of science during the quarter century. Science does not

doubt, it inquires. An interrogation point is a positive, rather than a negative sign. Individual men may announce themselves agnostics concerning this doctrine or that, or this creed or that, but if they are truly scientific at heart, of necessity they conform to the definition of faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews, because they believe where they cannot see. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." When a scientific man reaches the deeper realities, he must bow before them, whether he is aware of their nature or not. It is these realities which he is seeking, and not the mere outsides of things.

One may say, "I have searched, and have found no spirit in man and no God in the universe." If he has finished his quest and is satisfied, he must be numbered among skeptics, but if with a willingness to accept whatever the future may reveal he continues the search for the essential reality, he must be numbered among the men of faith.

The proportion of men of science who are deeply religious is larger than many think. In the British Scientific Association the Christian members maintain a daily prayer meeting. Lord Kelvin is an elder in a Scotch Presbyterian church; Professor Young, the Princeton astronomer, is, or was, an elder in an American Presbyterian church. George J. Romanes after long wandering in the deserts of agnosticism came back to a child's faith.

Agassiz was a devout believer in God. John L. Gulick, who in the opinion of Mr. Romanes has made more original contributions to the doctrine of evolution than any scientist after Darwin, is a missionary of the American Board in Japan; Sir William Dawson finds a divine revelation in the rocks; Asa Gray used to delight in saying that he was an evolutionist and also a believer in the Nicene Creed. Few books have done more to strengthen faith in immortality than the "Unseen Universe," the joint work of Professors Tate and Balfour Stewart. Henry Drummond was both a professor of physical science and an evangelist. If this is an age of science, it is of necessity an age of faith, since the scientist trusts his own intellectual processes, which is one act of faith, and believes in a reality behind phenomena, which is another act of faith.



I turn now to literature. Here at first the skeptics

Literature
and Faith.

seem to have the field, but once more I insist that a thorough induction of facts will show that faith is a distinguishing characteristic of the age. Zola, Paul Bourget, and Brunetière in France may be skeptics; John Morley, Frederic Harrison, Mrs. Humphry Ward, and Thomas Hardy, to say nothing of Matthew Arnold and George Eliot, who have recently died, may be agnostics, although some of them would deny the

title. Skepticism may predominate in France, but how is it in England and America? The Scottish school of fiction is just now most prominent in the literature of the English speaking world. What a rare company of literary artists are included in this list! MacDonald, Stevenson, Barrie, Crockett, Ian Maclaren, all are known as devout believers. Three of them, MacDonald, Crockett, and Ian Maclaren, have preached as well as written the gospel.

Writers of fiction and poets are the best interpreters of the thought and life of a people. The fact that no novels are so popular as those which treat of religious subjects shows where the hearts of the people are. "Quo Vadis," "The Christian," "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," "Robert Elsmere," "Marcella," may contain little that is positively religious, but their popularity shows that the people believe in vital religion, rather than in ecclesiastical forms, and that they are ready to listen to any who, brushing aside all that is merely traditional, dare to speak of the things which they have seen and of which they have heard. In this country the best fiction has had a basis of religion. "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "The Scarlet Letter," "Elsie Venner," "Old Creole Days," "A Singular Life," all show deep faith in God and man. The book

with the widest circulation of any written in the last decade, namely, "In His Steps," is a sermon story whose sale is reported to be in the millions, a book which may not be fine art, but which is noble literature because it inspires to high thinking and noble living. The most potent and enduring literary force in Europe is Count Tolstoi, a thinker whose creed may not square with the early theology of New England, or the more recent theology of New Jersey, but a man with the courage of a warrior and the vision of a prophet, who has penetrated deeply into the heart of human life and found that character is the sublimest thing of which an author can write or for which a man can seek.

When we turn to the poets, the great voices utter no uncertain sound. Who that remembers Browning, Tennyson, Lowell, Whittier, and Sidney Lanier, can think of calling this an age of doubt? Quotations are hardly necessary, for these writers were veritable prophets of God. Recall Browning's "Saul" and "Cleon." Listen to the refrain in "Pippa Passes:" —

The Witness
of the Poets.

"God's in His heaven —

All's right with the world!"

That reveals the basis of sublime and deathless optimism. Again listen to this from "A Death in the Desert:" —

"I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ,
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise."

This is a definite and noble statement of the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Tennyson was the prophet of faith. He believed in —

"That God which ever lives and loves."

He evidently described himself in what follows: —

"He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own."

We must not forget the first stanza of "In Memoriam: " —

"Strong son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove."

No better illustration of faith was ever written than is contained in that stanza.

I need only to mention Whittier's "Our Master" and "The Eternal Goodness," while passing on to two selections from other American poets. Sidney Lanier was a child of song. He seemed like a strain of music which had become incarnate. Was

anything more dainty and exquisite, yet noble and true, ever written than his "A Ballad of Trees and the Master"?

"Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little gray leaves were kind to Him:
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came.

"Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When Death and Shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last:
'T was on a tree they slew Him — last
When out of the woods He came."

That music could never have floated out into literature from a chilly atmosphere of doubt. It is a beam from the sunlight of faith.

Richard Watson Gilder has written what he calls "The Story of a Heathen, Sojourning in Galilee, A. D. 32." It bears all the marks of being its author's confession of faith.

"If Jesus Christ is a man
And only a man — I say
That of all mankind I will cleave to Him,
And to Him will I cleave alway.

“ If Jesus Christ is a God
And the only God — I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air.”

I must offer one more illustration — the wonderful prayer of Robert Louis Stevenson: “ We beseech Thee, Lord, to behold us with favor, folk of many families and nations, gathered together in the peace of this roof; weak men and women subsisting under the covert of Thy patience. Be patient still; suffer us yet a while longer with our broken purposes of good, with our idle endeavors against evil — suffer us a while longer to endure, and (if it may be) help us to do better. Bless to us our extraordinary mercies; if the day come when they must be taken, brace us to play the man under affliction. Be with our friends, be with ourselves. Go with each of us to rest; if any awake, temper to them the dark hours of watching; and when the day returns, return to us our sun and comforter, call us with morning faces, eager to labor, eager to be happy, if happiness shall be our portion, and, if the day be marked for sorrow, strong to endure it. We thank Thee, and praise Thee, and, in the words of Him to whom this day is sacred, close our oblation.”

There is much pessimism in the literature of our time. There are novelists and poets who are satis-

fied to soak in slime and allow its filth to ooze from their pens. But this writing is not literature ; it is not healthy, nor wholesome, nor sane ; it is not beautiful nor true. The vileness which masquerades in the garments of literary art does not suggest the morning of a new day, but rather, let us say, one already far advanced toward a dismal sunset.

The Frog Pond is not Boston, the Bowery is not New York, and the drivel of unclean poets and the foulness of the fleshly school in fiction are not the literature which is fashioning ideals most characteristic of our time. A deeper and finer music is making itself heard. The literature which is destined to influence the future, like the great works of the masters of the past, is that which treats of the hunger of the soul for God, for immortality, for reconciliation, and of the answers to these longings, which must be divine because they so completely satisfy.

No diagnosis of our time would be at all adequate which did not recognize the large place which is being given to the study of Comparative Religion. This also reveals a deep current of thought which is making in the direction of faith. This interest in the Ethnic Religions is more than unrest ; it is more than curiosity ; it is evidence that men feel the existence

The Witness
of the Study
of Comparative
Religion.

of some deep reality behind phenomena. Not alone to satisfy curiosity have the Sacred Books of the East been translated. There is spiritual unrest. The Americans, like the Athenians, are always anxious for some new thing, but that unrest and anxiety are not self-caused. They are the product, if I mistake not, of an intellectual attitude which may properly be called faith, since it is search for truth undertaken with the expectation that the quest will be rewarded. The search may be sometimes half hearted, but the desire to know is usually genuine, and the purpose to accept what is made known is, to say the least, worthy of respect.

The Parliament of Religions may not have been prophetic, but it was significant. It was not an exhibition of disloyalty on the The Parliament of Religions. part of believers in any religion. It was rather an object lesson in the universality of faith. In that gathering were Buddhists, Parsees, Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians. The mental and spiritual differences between those present were greater than the differences in their physical appearance, but all were alike in one respect. They were men of faith. They believed in something, and they believed that to that something they owed supreme and unflinching loyalty. The attitude of mind was the same in Buddhist, Moham-

medan, Confucian, and Christian, although the objects toward which faith was directed were different. That Congress represented the world. The supreme force in the progress of the world is religion. All nations are more or less religious, and, we may add, more or less ethical. The basis of religion is faith, since it always deals with the unseen. The prevalence of religion is evidence of the reality and universality of faith.

The Sacred Books of the East have been translated under the editorship of Professor Max Müller, and thus the Bibles of the world are now within the reach of all who wish to read them. But that is not more significant than the competition for their publication. At first they were held at prices practically prohibitive. Quickly competitors who knew the fascination of the subject for the reading public brought the works within the reach of even the poor, and now the Zend Avesta, the Trepitika, and the Koran are widely studied by those who are the leaders of religious thought. It is not enough now for a religious teacher to know his Bible; he must know the Bibles of other nations before he can intelligently plead for foreign missions and the evangelization of the world.

This does not indicate decadence of religion, but rather a broader culture on the part of those

who teach, and a more intense desire to be able to present truth rationally and satisfactorily. Doubtless curiosity is the motive behind this study with many, but not with the more intelligent or more spiritual. The opening of the non-Christian world and the study of the Ethnic religions have given new and vaster significance to faith. The paper prayers on the walls of Buddhist temples; the processions of worshipers that wearily climb the steps of Mayahsan; the pilgrims that year by year visit Mecca; the hosts that throng Lourdes and Ste. Anne de Beaupré, may have very false ideas as to the Deity and the worship which is pleasing to Him; they may be very superstitious, but they have the right mental attitude, and when a real and rational gospel is presented, most will grasp it with avidity and delight. The time has passed for us to think of those in non-Christian lands as all inspired by the Evil One.

If those who will to believe sometimes learn the truth, as they surely must when the revelation is clearer, thousands who now bow before Amida Buddha and prostrate themselves at the muezzin's call will join in placing on the head of our Christ the many crowns.

This has been called the age of criticism as well as of science. Literary criticism is really the application of the scientific spirit to literature. It

subjects all writings to inspection and analysis, and

Criticism a
Sign of
Faith. upon all passes its judgment. Did "the
blind old bard" write our Homer? That

is a question. Did Shakespeare write the plays which bear his name? Some persons are very sure that he did not. Thus the process moves on until it reaches the Bible. "Thus far shalt thou come,

but no farther," say those who identify truth with tradition. But the critics reply: "The greater the claims of sanctity for any book, or any person, the more rigorously those claims should be tested."

Truth cannot suffer at the hands of investigators.

Critics are like artists who discover beneath the dirt of a century the work of a master. "Do not touch that canvas," say those who have regarded it worthy of a place in some famous gallery.

"Scrape it and you will spoil it," they vociferously affirm. But the process of cleansing goes on, until out of the accumulated filth of years there shines the beauty of a Raphael or a Murillo. Were those who renewed that canvas the enemies or the friends of art? Their work is analogous to the task of the critics who take in their hands the Holy Bible, and unwind one wrapping of tradition after another, until the truth itself shines with a brighter lustre. These men do not study day and night for years, denying themselves the prizes of the world, for the mere delight

or shocking pious people. Neither pleasure, wealth, nor fame, is the reward of their labors. They are impelled by a desire for truth, by faith in its reality, and by confidence that it may be discovered if the quest is patient and thorough.

I am speaking of the deeper currents of thought and investigation. Critics are human. Among them, as among artists and authors, and, for that matter, among preachers and scientists, are many whose spirit is selfish and whose manner is flippant. Bombast for a time may attract more attention than merit; but lasting work is always genuine. Egotism is ephemeral. ◀ The master minds of every age are reverently loyal to truth so far as they know what is true. ▶

The new movement in theology is a part of the critical movement. Its leaders are not skeptics, but men of faith. They do not emphasize their doubts. Their opinions are not those which were commonly held a generation ago, but they are not therefore less positive or well founded. The passage from one school of thought to another should brand no one as an unbeliever. The butterfly is not a skeptic because it is no longer willing to crawl on the earth as a worm; and those men who feel that they have passed from a region of fogs and miasms to a clear and splendid intellectual horizon are possessed of

Faith the
Note of the
New Move-
ment in The-
ology.

a faith in God and man that is positive and assuring. They have no faith in their former world as best for them now, but they have profound faith in the ampler world into which they have grown. They never believed so intensely, so joyously, so victoriously, as since they came into the freedom of the spirit, and dared to bring every creed to the test of the inner light as well as to that of the Scripture. The critics and the newer theologians are not seeking to undermine confidence in anything which ought to endure; they are only trying to remove whatever obscures the light of the eternal realities. The new movement in theology is the renaissance of faith.

Rome in the time of Augustus was hardly more
Current
Fads, Signs
of Faith. given to religious fads than are the so-called Christian lands, as the nineteenth century draws to its close. It seems as if some new phase of religion were born each day. This is not altogether a cause for discouragement. Who are these claimants upon our attention? They preach a gospel of Hypnotism, Occultism in varying forms, Spiritualism, Faith-Healing, Christian Science, Mental Science, and so on through a long list. I have called these teachings "fads," not because they do not contain much that is true, but because they take facts out of their right relations and give them a prominence which in the

nature of things can only be temporary. The relative amount of truth and error in these teachings I need not try to determine. But one point is important and that is this: They all illustrate the universality of faith, since all of them rest on evidence which is entirely in the sphere of the unseen. None of them can offer any proof different in kind from that which is offered in support of the being of God and the immortality of the soul. < The growth of Christian Science, for example, reminds one of those waves of emotion which swept over Europe in the Middle Ages, filling the monasteries, and inspiring the Crusades. The motive is right, but the reason and the judgment are not properly consulted. Science is discarded, and momentous conclusions are adopted for purely sentimental reasons. The spirit underneath most of these movements is noble and sometimes self-sacrificing. The woman who will die rather than deny her conviction that God is good, and therefore that there is no sickness, has the same spiritual heroism as the martyrs in the heroic age of the church. She is wrong in her use of faith, but right in the fidelity with which it is used.

Christian
Science

Yet the "fads" of the day all illustrate our point that this is essentially an age of faith.

I come now to one of the most significant and prophetic facts of our time. "The crusade of

charity " has gathered momentum from the Advent until now. It had its origin in the teaching and person of Jesus Christ. Even those who have denied His divinity have freely granted the power of His beneficent example. In the last few years charity has assumed many new forms. They are seen in the various social experiments and especially in a few of the social settlements. This limitation should be observed, for most of the social settlements are positively Christian. A few who work in them, and in the spirit of Christ seek to serve humanity, say that they have no religious convictions whatever. They will affirm no belief in God, in a spiritual nature in man, or in immortality, and yet they are possessed with a consuming passion to serve their fellow men, and their service is as sacrificial and as successful as that of those who are more willing to affirm beliefs. Look a little deeper into this fact. These persons are not infrequently those who have had serious losses, or grievous disappointments, and have undertaken this work because they believe that thus alone can their own wounds be healed. At least they do believe that the service of their fellow men has a balm for sorrow. More than that, a man's belief is to be judged by what he does rather than by what he says. These persons would not sacrifice as they do for trees nor

The Crusade
of Charity
an Evidence
of Faith.

for marble monuments. In other words, they believe in spirit in man. They would not labor and sacrifice as they do if they were assured that every one whom they serve would at death utterly cease to be. They may say they have no belief in life after death, and yet they are working to make others fit to live and grow beyond the grave. These noble workers at least have faith in humanity, and that its service will return a blessing to them. Thus their work is an expression of faith as real and as inspiring as that of those who say that they are sure of God as they are of themselves.

The inspiration of modern charity, even of those forms whose enthusiasts most protest that they are faithless, is the same in kind as that of the martyrs and the missionaries. They are fired by a belief in a reality which can neither be seen nor demonstrated, but which nevertheless controls their conduct and leads to consecration and sacrifice.

I have not entered into a consideration of any of the distinctly Christian or philanthropic movements of our time, yet their transforming influence it would be hard to exaggerate. No finer literature has been written in this century than works like those of Newman, Liddon, Fairbairn, Samuel Harris, and George Adam Smith. The finest lyric poetry is

Christian
and Philan-
thropic
Agencies all
illustrate
Faith.

found among Christian hymns. The noblest modern oratory is still in the pulpit despite all that has been said about its decadence. The most far-reaching, successful, and influential enterprise of modern times is that of Christian missions, which has followed pioneers and explorers around the world, and planted schools and churches where commerce and armies have been slow to enter. But while these have hardly been mentioned, they have their place in the life of the world, and must be studied before the characteristics of this age can be understood. They illustrate the pervasiveness of faith. The world lives by faith. It is universal and elemental.

This is not the saddest time since the Cæsars.

No Room for
Pessimism.

There is a widespread and subtle melancholy in many quarters. Tennyson did write "Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After," but still later than that he wrote "Crossing the Bar," and went away into the Unseen to the music of an anthem.

That many do not hold the old faiths in the old forms is readily granted. (Nor can there be any question that with the increase of wealth and luxury there has grown a feeling of irresponsibility which bodes no good to the church or the world.) The millennium has not yet dawned, but men, as evidently as in the older ages, are living by faith.

They are knocking on Nature's door as insistently as ever. 〈We do not knock on Nature's door if we believe that there is no one behind to hear.〉 The knocking is proof of belief in the existence of some One able and willing to respond. This is eminently a time of inquiry. The spread of learning and the growth of knowledge have resulted in a desire to know more and to be surer of what has been held to be true in the past. Every movement to explore the universe is a prayer to God for a fuller and clearer revelation of Himself and His will. The eagerness with which so many are testing their old beliefs and reaching out for wider knowledge is a most hopeful sign of the times. While men think and inquire, there is danger neither of unbelief nor pessimism. The words of Jesus have eternal significance. "Seek and ye shall find ; knock and it shall be opened unto you." This is the age of the seekers after reality, after God, after the truth concerning man, after the meaning of sorrow and suffering, after something satisfying concerning what lies beyond death. The confession in "In Memoriam" has been used by many, not as a doubter's wail, but as the voice of those who truly believe.

"I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's aliar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

“ I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.”

What are the truths which need emphasis in an age when the masses of men see through a glass darkly, but still are anxious for more light? They will accept nothing on authority. The days of dictum are over. Nothing will have power now which does not convince the reason and satisfy the heart. Tradition can transmit only what it has received. There is nothing divine in age or essentially true in newness. We must teach and preach the truths which have actually convinced and satisfied us ; which we believe and can commend because of what we have seen and experienced. The gospel for an age of faith, a gospel which makes life worth living, rings the knell of pessimism, begins and ends in the revelation of God, who in all the eternities and infinities, in His dealings with this world and all worlds, is truly made known in Jesus Christ, who in His earthly life, His unwearying service, His matchless teaching, His self-sacrificing death, and His victory over the grave, was “ the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person.”

That glorious Gospel of the Fatherhood, the only gospel for an age of faith and inquiry, and the only rational basis of optimism, I shall endeavor to interpret in the chapters of this book.

II

THE CONCEPTION OF GOD

THE desire of nearly all thinking people for a clearer idea of what is meant by the word God is slowly but emphatically finding expression. One of the results of the spread of learning and the growth of intelligence is the tendency of the masses to grapple with the difficult problems of speculation. This inquiry touches the religious life at every point. How should we pray? To whom shall we pray? What is meant by Providence? What reason have we to believe in the ultimate triumph of truth and right? It is a commonplace to say that men are always like their ideas of Deity,—that where those ideas have been lofty, men have been noble and good; where they have been unworthy, men have been sensual and depraved. Our theme is not abstract, indefinite, and purely speculative; it is intensely human and practical.

The greatness of this theme is best appreciated by those who have studied it most thoroughly. It has been the quest of philosophy in all ages. I do not present the thoughts

Greatness of
the Subject.

which follow in this chapter because I have any new light to shed upon this subject, but rather in the hope that I may help a few to clearer thinking on lines which have long been familiar to the world's religious teachers. At first it seems easy enough to answer the inquiry, Who or what is God? But a little effort will show that it is difficult to put into speech even a small part of the content and suggestion of the word. Words are inadequate for the expression of our deepest thoughts and much more for that of our profoundest feelings. Behind human speech flash hints of a world that cannot find expression. Infinite, absolute, eternal, God, are only like x in the algebraic equation; they stand for depths of thought and sentiment that beat in vain against our human limitations. This subject is found to be more difficult the longer it is studied. If the idea of God is limited, it can easily be defined; if it is at all adequate, it transcends definition.

Who and what is God? Shall we say that He is the Creator and Preserver of the uni-verse? But what is the universe? That word also is only a symbol for the unknown. No one mind can comprehend the greatness of the earth. St. Peter's Church in Rome seems smaller than it is because it cannot be seen at a glance. Mont Blanc lifts itself in solemn splendor; it may

The Problem.

be looked upon, climbed, surveyed, but it is an endless study. And the Himalayas are loftier than the Alps. Before great mountains, or when sailing on the Pacific or the Atlantic, ask, Who and what is God? Then look up into the great wide sky; note the procession of the stars, — the systems and galaxies of worlds whose number cannot be estimated; remember that they are but the outmost fringe of the universe; and then ask, What do you mean by Creator and Preserver? The distances are measureless; the spaces are boundless; the constellations are without number. We are in the presence of thoughts too great for us. Every time a prayer is offered and the word God is mentioned, it has relation to infinite space, measureless distance, multitudinous worlds, and to the power that holds them in their places. What do you mean by Creator? Has some being designed this universe as a man designs a house? What do you mean by Preserver? Is there some one who holds worlds and planetary systems in his hands, and watches over them as we watch over the things which we manufacture? This problem we must try to solve. On some solution of it every religion of the world rests. Not a sermon can be preached nor a prayer be intelligently offered that is not preceded by some answer to the question, What is meant by God?

Still more searchingly, the inquiry is pressed upon us, How can there be a person great enough to be Creator and Preserver of the universe? Is not the universe the all? And is there any place or space outside the universe in which a person can dwell? If there is no such place or space, then is He not a part of the universe? And if He is a part of the universe, or if He dwells in it, is not the universe itself God? Then is not the Pantheist's contention true — that the all is God? that He rises to consciousness only in the consciousness of human beings? that He loves only in human beings who love? that He hates only in human beings who hate? that He comes into manifestation in the splendor of dawns and the glory of sunsets, in earthquake-tragedies and the violence of terrible storms?

At the outset we meet certain evident facts. Only through something human can know-
ledge of God be conveyed. Man must The Human
Vehicle of
Revelation. be known before God can be known. We must believe in the trustworthiness of human faculties before there can be any Bible for us. Revelations from God come through the mental faculties of men to the mental faculties of men, and belief in God is impossible without prior belief in man. We rise through the human to the divine. If any message comes from beyond the stars, it

must be in a form adapted to our limitations. With reverence we say that if God speaks to us expecting to be understood, it must be in human language; and if He uses a voice, it must be a human voice. If the heavens were to open and He were to speak otherwise than in the terms of our limitations, we should fail to understand the message and the messenger alike.

Again, the supposition that man can know any-
 thing of God depends on the prior fact
 Kinship of Nature. that there is something of God in man,
 even at his worst. {How may we know that the
 voice which speaks to us is divine? Only on
 the presumption that there is something divine
 in man. The God within man recognizes the God
 without.}

A stone cannot interpret a logical process; a mountain cannot respond to music. There must
 be harmony of nature before there can be mutual
 recognition. One man appreciates another because
 there is kinship between them. I recognize the
 message which comes from my father because my
 father in a real sense lives in his son. In like
 manner I recognize what comes from God only as I
 have in myself something of God. This is not the
 result of a process of regeneration, else there would
 be no possibility of making effective appeals to
 the unregenerate. Christians believe in missions;

they send missionaries to preach in the dark places of the earth. A beastly man in the heart of Africa, a degraded woman in a great city, must have in them something of God, or it is folly to send missionaries to them. The work of ministers and missionaries presupposes in the vilest something divine. A mountain is impervious to the men who climb its flanks, and men would be equally impervious to divine appeals if there were not something divine in them. "Only the good discerns the good." Only a being akin to God can recognize God.

Another point is equally evident: the finite can never fully explore the infinite. The imperfect can never comprehend the perfect. The limited cannot compass the unlimited.

Revelation
the Condition
of
Knowledge.

How, then, may the imperfect and the limited have knowledge of the perfect and unlimited? Only as the greater being reveals himself. No man by searching has found out God. Our senses may discern something which we know to be not ourselves, but what it is we cannot adequately define. If, then, there is ever knowledge of God, it will be because He chooses to make Himself known. Therefore we say revelation is the condition of knowledge. That is recognized in all religion, all science, all philosophy, and all theology. Men study the universe because they believe that it is

the expression of something behind. Mountain and meadow, sea and sun, flower and constellation, and man himself, all in a measure manifest the Being by whose will they exist. The universe exhibits power, law, order; man exhibits intelligence, will, feeling. These revelations have messages for all who are able to read them. "First the natural, afterward the spiritual," but that is only in the order of knowledge. In the order of being the spiritual is first, and the natural afterward.

These three thoughts are fundamental: —

All knowledge of the divine must be gained through the human.

There is something divine in man, or he could know nothing of God.

God never can be known unless He reveals Himself.

Man and the universe are both to be studied as revelations, expressions, manifestations, of Some One behind them. We do not proceed very far in our investigation before we learn that all material objects show the effects of intelligence; that matter is determined, but that behind it is something self-conscious and self-determining; that body is dependent on that intelligence which we call spirit; that spirit is the ultimate reality; and that it uses, orders, regulates the body.

Both Man
and the Uni-
verse to be
studied.

Nature is as evidently the abode of spirit as is a human body. I employ the word "spirit" simply because it is the common word — I mean, of course, that there is something behind matter which uses it, and by which it is controlled. When an attempt is made to analyze that something in humanity, we find that it shows signs of intellect — it knows; of feeling — it loves; of will — it chooses. That something in man constitutes his personality. But in him it is limited. We now make a necessary inference: that which is imperfect in man suggests perfection somewhere; that which is limited in man somewhere must be unlimited. A word in common use in theology and philosophy is "Absolute," which means the perfect, the unlimited, the infinite. Imperfect and narrow intelligence in a human being implies unlimited and infinite intelligence somewhere or everywhere, as one ray of light shows that there is a universe of brightness. You cannot imagine one ray of light as self-existent, and with no companions; it is a revelation of that fountain of splendor from which it came. So it is with the mind, heart, and will of man. A ray of intelligence suggests a limitless mind; a single volition suggests infinite will; one throb of human affection tells us that somewhere and somehow love is measureless and eternal. The limitless mind, the infinite will, the perfect love,

we call the Absolute ; or, turning from philosophy to religion, God. Rising from the human to the divine ; from intellect, feeling, and will in their limitations to their perfection, we have what we mean by God. These three characteristics distinguish personality. A being who has will and affection without intelligence, or intelligence and affection without will, is not a person. Personality is bound up with ability to know, to feel, and to choose. When these three in their limitations are united in a self-conscious being, we have a person in humanity. The perfection of intelligence, of love, and of will, in a single self-consciousness, is God.

The word "person" as commonly used cannot be understood by a reference to its etymology. Originally it referred to the mask through which an actor spoke — that through which the sound came. But this meaning quickly gave place to that of the being behind the mask. In the Hindu philosophy, and in all the pantheistic forms of religion, the etymological significance of the word is still retained, but in occidental thought, both theological and philosophical, "person" refers to being. By personality we do not mean any mere manifestation, but essential being. The Absolute is the being in whom reason, will, and love are united in perfect and therefore infinite self-consciousness.

Meaning of
Personality.

We have now only just approached our subject. From the limited personality we have risen to the infinite personality. Here our real difficulty begins, for no one by any possibility can comprehend the infinite. We see a ray of light expanding toward the sun; it is lost in splendor, but what is hidden in that splendor not even imagination can fathom. From the personality of man we look up toward the personality of God. But the line along which thought moves quickly transcends our ability to follow, and soon all is greatness, glory, and infinity. Such inquiries as these now press themselves upon us: Where is this Person whom we thought that we had found, and to whom we had given a name? Is He outside the universe? Then the universe is not the All, and there is no universe. Is He inside the universe? Then is not the universe itself God? These questions we cannot answer. But the analogy of man may help a little.

The spirit in man is not the body. It is independent of it; it uses it, and yet it tran-
 scends it. Bunyan was confined in prison, but his spirit climbed the Delectable Mountains and passed through the gates of the Celestial City. Milton was blind, and was tied to a woman who could not appreciate him, but his spirit went back to the creation and on toward the consummation, rose to the loftiest heavens and penetrated to the

God the Spirit
 of the
 Universe.

deepest hells. The body may hamper the spirit, but cannot imprison it. Body and spirit are not identical. Beethoven's ears were deaf, but his spirit was thrilled by heavenly harmonies. If we say that the universe is all, that there is no space or place outside, and yet think of God as the spirit of the universe, we do not identify Him with the universe, any more than we identify body and spirit in man. The spirit which constitutes man manifests itself through the body, and yet is not the body; and the Infinite Spirit manifests Himself through the material universe and yet is not that universe. In a sense Goethe was right: "The universe is the garment of God." Through it His glory shines, and yet He is not the garment. The architect of Cologne Cathedral is revealed in his work. So God is revealed in the universe — with this difference: the cathedral has an existence apart from its architect, but the universe has no existence apart from God. He is the principle of its life; by Him it is sustained; by Him it is preserved; in Him it exists. Does this mean that the material universe is eternal? Here again we are getting beyond our depth. The universe has been in a state of constant change. It has not always been as it now is; but that it has always been the expression of the infinite Spirit seems to me to be the only answer that can be given to that question.

My thought, then, is this : The relation of God, the Spirit, to the universe is figured, or indicated, by the relation of the spirit in man to the body. The Deity is the spirit of the universe ; not dependent upon it ; not imprisoned by it ; but always manifesting Himself in all its changes and evolutions.

But still we are only a little nearer to an answer to our question. An infinite and everlasting Spirit, pervading the universe, yet transcending it, is philosophically conceivable, but the idea is not easily comprehended by the average mind. Between the absolute and the limited impassable barriers seem to arise. How is it possible to cross these barriers?

This leads to the philosophical basis of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine is popularly supposed to be peculiarly a scriptural doctrine. It is mentioned in the Scriptures, but only in fragmentary ways, as something taken for granted, as is all their teaching about God. Neither its formation nor its explanation is found in the Scriptures, but entirely in the sphere of philosophy. The terms Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are equally applied to God, but the Biblical writers do not attempt to harmonize the apparent contradiction. When we turn from the Scriptures to that other and larger revelation which we call the universe, and again to that other one written in the constitution of the human

The Doctrine of the Trinity.


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soul, we find an answer to our question. Beginning with intellect, feeling, will in man, we find that they quickly disappear in the infinite. The infinite spirit transcends human thought and imagination. We talk about the infinite, but do not know the meaning of the word ; we speak of God, but do not know the language which we are using. Those words stand for the measureless and the everlasting. We turn our eyes again to ourselves and to human relations. We love, and, in proportion to the quality of our being, we desire to make our love known and helpful to others like ourselves. The best father is most anxious that his son should appreciate his love. If, now, the infinite Spirit is perfect love, He must desire to make Himself known to those who, even in the dimmest way, long for Him. The perfect love must respond to the limited longing of humanity, or it cannot be perfect. Therefore we conclude that as the infinite Spirit is perfect, He does not exist in the solitary contemplation of His own perfection, but He reveals Himself to those who can appreciate a little of that perfection. That conclusion follows from the perfection of God. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is simply the expression of the inevitable conclusion that the Absolute and the Perfect must make Himself known. The Logos doctrine, or the doctrine of the Son, is the belief that God eter-

nally manifests Himself. He not only exists, but He exists in self-revelation. The Absolute, God beyond our power to grasp or understand, we call Father; and it is a rare tribute to humanity that it instinctively accepts that great and blessed name as belonging to the Unseen and the All. What lies behind the name? infinite and abysmal Fatherhood. Fatherhood must make itself known. That tendency to revelation in the divine nature we call the Son. The Son is God revealing Himself. Consequently all references in the New Testament to the universe are associated with the Son; the creation is ascribed to Him; the power of holding the worlds together is ascribed to Him; all revelations of power and love are associated with Him. The scientist, who learns something of God from the stars or the rocks, studies the self-revelation of God which we call the Son as certainly as the theologian, who approaches the same self-revelation of God which in its human form is in Jesus Christ. The philosophical basis for this truth is this axiom: perfect love must manifest itself. The manifestation, God revealing Himself, in theological language is called the Logos, or the Son.

But we have not gone thus far without meeting another fact, namely, revelation is not all by means of outward vehicles; not all in burning sun and flaming stars; through human voice and written

word. One man reveals himself to another by the touch of his spirit. It is impossible to explain this beautiful mystery. It is something more than example — spirit speaks to spirit in humanity without physical media; and spirit speaks to spirit in the relation between the finite and the infinite. In the silences you have had visions which were not caused by your environment; suggestions apparently from those who no longer live in the flesh; thoughts which have reached far beyond this earthly life. Where did they come from? That aspiration for holiness is not connected with food or drink, with persons who have been seen, with words which have been heard. It came silently as light and invisibly as dew. In other words, the limited human spirit feels the touch of the unlimited and infinite Spirit. And that must ever be. If there is a perfect Spirit, and our limited and imperfect spirits long for companionship, then according to our imperfection and His perfection will His nature tend to manifest Himself to us and to hold fellowship with us. And so we have the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit — which means that God, the Spirit, has relations with human spirits otherwise than by His revelations in the universe, or by any word which was spoken, or any act which was performed by Jesus Christ, or by any other man who ever lived. The

doctrine of the Trinity finds its justification in the constitution of man and the universe. The infinite spirit can never be comprehended, but He can make Himself known.  The uncompromised is God the Father; the same Being eternally manifesting Himself in nature, in history, in Jesus Christ, is God the Son; the same Being touching your spirit and mine with aspiration, longing, deep desire, and possibly with real revelation of something before unknown, is God the Holy Spirit. > But, you ask, how can you prove this doctrine? It cannot be proved; it is a spontaneous belief.

Spontaneous beliefs have the force of Divine revelations. They need no proof, although they can be verified, and it is the office of reason to verify them while it can neither prove nor disprove them.

Thus we are led to our conclusion. Spirit in God and in man means exactly the same, Spirit Everywhere. only in one it is unlimited and perfect, and in the other limited and imperfect. Intelligence in God and in man means exactly the same, only in one it is unlimited and in the other limited. Love in God means the same as it does in man with the same qualification. In the love of a child for his mother, or of a mother for her child, there is manifested something of God. When a man and woman in pure love give themselves to each other, in that human love is manifested something

of God. God is pure human love multiplied by infinity and eternity. Rising along these lines we find that at last they compass the whole universe, and we dimly discern not only behind this world and this planetary system, but behind all planetary systems, and all groups and constellations of worlds, and controlling all, the Spirit that pervades all and yet transcends all. That Spirit possesses intelligence, will, and love, exactly such as we know in ourselves, but they are related to such qualities in man as the dewdrop is to the ocean, or a single breath to the universal atmosphere. The dewdrop can never encompass the ocean ; one ray of light can never swallow up the splendor of the sun ; and the spirit in man can never fully comprehend the Spirit which we call God. But making Himself known in self-revelation, and coming into personal contact with our spirits, is the Being whom we worship, and whom Christians delight to glorify as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

There is a practical side to this subject which can hardly be exaggerated. The most conspicuous contribution of theology to the life of our time is the new emphasis which it has placed on the Divine immanence. Immanence means that God pervades the universe as the spirit pervades the body, so that He is manifested in every part, though not identical with any part. He uses

Divine Im-
manence.

the universe as the spirit uses the body. He is independent of the universe and transcends it as the spirit in man is independent of and transcends his body.

This doctrine does not teach us "that every particle of dust driven in the wind, every drop of spray from the surf dashing on every shore, the motion and action of every molecule of matter is caused by a direct and distinct volition and exertion of God. We are rather to suppose that from Him energy is continuously flowing into the physical system, sustaining it in being, and directing its evolution according to its constitution and laws."¹ Here again the analogy of the human spirit and body helps us, for the will is often the source of the energy and vitality by which the body is sustained and even strengthened.

Our spirit "not only works through the brain and nervous system, but, as a result, pervades the entire organism, animating and inspiring it with its own 'peculiar difference;' so that we recognize a man's character in the expression of his eye, the tone of his voice, the touch of his hand, his unconscious and instinctive postures, and gestures, and gait. Nor is this 'immanence' confined to the bodily organism. It extends, in what may be called a secondary degree, to the inanimate objects

¹ Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, vol. i. p. 83.

of the external world. For a man imprints his spiritual character upon all the things with which he deals—his house, his clothes, his furniture, the various products of his hand and head. We speak of a man's spirit surviving in his works; the expression is no mere metaphor; for through those works, even though dead and gone, he continues to influence his fellow men. While we look at the pictures of Raphael, or listen to the music of Beethoven, or read the poetry of Dante or the philosophy of Plato, the spirits of the great masters affects us as really as if we saw them face to face: they are immanent in the painted canvas and the printed page. Spirit, then, as we know it in our own personal experience, has two different relations to matter, that of transcendence, and that of immanence. But though logically distinct, these two relations are not actually separate: they are two aspects of one fact; two points of view from which the single action of our one personality may be regarded. As self-conscious, self-identical, self-determined, we possess qualities which transcend or rise above the laws of matter; but we can only realize these qualities, and so become aware of them, by acting in the material world; while conversely, material objects—our bodies and our works of art—could never possibly be regarded as expressions of spirit, if spirit were not at

the same time recognized as distinct from its medium of manifestation.”¹

“If then we are to raise the question, ‘What is the relation of the supreme Spirit to the material universe?’ this is the analogy upon which we must proceed; for we have no other. We may indeed decline the problem as wholly insoluble; but if we attempt its solution at all, it must of necessity be upon the lines of the only experience which we possess — this experience in which transcendence and immanence are combined.”²

This truth of the immanence of God is a favorite one with the poets. The following are three illustrations: —

“One Spirit — His who wore the platted thorns with bleeding
brows —

Rules universal nature. Not a flower
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
Of His unrivaled pencil. He inspires
Their balmy odors and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
In grains as countless as the sea-side sands,
The forms with which He sprinkles all the earth.
Happy who walks with Him! whom what he finds
Of flavor or of scent in fruit or flower,
Or what he views of beautiful or grand
In nature, from the broad majestic oak
To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
Prompts with remembrance of a present God.

¹ Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, pp. 80, 81.

² *Ibid.*, p. 81, 82.

His presence, who made all so fair, perceived,
 Makes all still fairer. As with him no scene
 Is dreary, so with him all seasons please.”¹

“O Thou — as represented here to me
 In such conception as my soul allows, —
 Under Thy measureless, my atom width! —
 Man’s mind, what is it but a convex glass
 Wherein are gathered all the scattered points
 Picked out of the immensity of sky,
 To reunite there, be our heaven for earth,
 Our known unknown, our God revealed to man?”²

“The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains —
 Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?”

“Is not the Vision He? tho’ He be not that which He seems?
 Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?”

“Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
 Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?”

“Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can
 meet —

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

“And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot
 see;

But if we could see and hear, this Vision — were it not He?”³



Cowper was an exponent of the old and somewhat mechanical theology, but he discovered the spiritual significance of nature as distinctly as Browning and Tennyson, and all three found God

¹ Cowper, *The Task*.

² Browning, *The Ring and the Book*.

³ Tennyson, *The Higher Pantheism*.

in the seas, and “aspectable stars,” and in the soul of man.

The divine transcendence should ever have the first place. It is the basis of veneration, fear, awe, and all that stimulates and inspires worship. Men never worship a being which they believe to be beneath them. The fetich of the savage symbolizes something greater than the worshiper. That is a true thought of Dr. Matheson that the primeval man worships a stone or a mountain because he thinks he has found something unchangeable — while he himself is subject to change. God is the object of veneration, fear, worship, because He is transcendent. But linked with that fact is the divine immanence which should never be overlooked, and which is the old doctrine of the divine Omnipresence with a new name.  Everything is transfigured in the eyes of those who realize that God pervades all things; that in a certain real sense He is in every flower and every star, every dewdrop and every sun; in the laughing child, the loving woman, the thinking man; that by Him all things were created, and in Him they consist. 

“God’s transcendence and immanence being in unison, the physical universe is not a dead wall separating us from God and hiding Him, but rather the screen on which, as in a panorama, we in the darkness see Him, from the intense light behind

the picture, Himself in His cosmic energizing before our eyes." ¹

"Though God extends beyond creation's rim,
Each smallest atom shows the whole of Him."

Modern science is demonstrating that an irremovable basis for the real in the universe can be found only in the ideal, unchangeable, in a mind behind the universe.

"Forever through the world's material forms
Heaven shoots the immaterial; night and day
Apocalyptic intimations stray
Across the rifts of matter."

The influence of this truth is revolutionary, and yet beneficent. If God is in humanity, then the old teaching concerning individual total depravity should give place to generous emphasis upon the fact that in every man is something of God, and therefore that all service of humanity is service of God. Did not St. John say: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen"? And did not our Lord Himself identify the service of the criminal, the poor, and the outcast with the service of God when He said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me"? This doctrine shows that man is not ignoble but essentially

Influence of
this Doctrine.

¹ Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, vol. i. p. 88.

divine ; that we worship God best when we most helpfully serve man ; that there has been a meaning in all the pains of progress ; that no people have ever been without God ; that He must have been as near to Pekin as He was to Jerusalem ; that while one nation was chosen for one mission, other nations have been equally chosen for other missions. If God is in humanity, the record of progress is the ever-growing manifestation of the Deity, and all its conflicts and divisions have underneath them a vital and abiding unity, which slowly but surely will manifest itself. History is not aimless and purposeless, because God is in His world working out His own plans.

Finally, it follows from this doctrine that the end of all things must be the triumph of truth and right, since God cannot forever be defeated. " Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that God's Spirit dwelleth in you ? " In the same way the physical creation is hallowed, because as His Spirit dwells in man it also dwells in the universe. The outcast woman is a sister of Mary the Mother of our Lord ; and the penitent thief finds his true home in the Paradise of God. All life, all service, all men, all things, the universe itself, are included in the divine plan, expressions of the divine intelligence, and the fulfillment of a purpose of love.

I conclude this chapter as follows: by the word "God" is meant the perfection of intelligence, will, love. They are not abstractions, but united in a self-conscious person; and that person in His infinity and eternity is truly though not fully made known in the universe, in history, in the constitution of man, and in the person of Jesus Christ.

June 20. 17

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III

GOD — INTERPRETED BY FATHERHOOD

IN the childhood of the race the nature of the Deity was inferred from the manifestations of energy in earth and air. Whatever produced instant and most intense terror was personified and supposed to be the mightiest of beings. Hence the first idea of the supreme Power (after that revealed through the family) was derived from winds, storms, earthquakes; from the sun, moon, and stars; from day and night, from sea and sky. Since the manifestations of force were many, and the fact of unity had not yet been discovered, belief in many gods naturally followed. They were interpreted by the effects which were produced on observers by natural phenomena. There were the gods of the day and night, of the storm and the sea. The idea of unity succeeded, but there was no change in the method of interpretation. Nature was nearest to man; nature was vaster than man — therefore nature was worshiped, and men were awed by her storms and made glad by her splendors. But nature had many forms and moods, and

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no man could appreciate more than one of them at a time. Consequently belief in many gods, some friendly and some hostile, became common. But these many deities were themselves dependent on a primal power, called Fate, or by some other name. Gradually this method of reasoning gave place to another. The evolution of government forced itself into prominence, and without any distinctly marked period of transition the interpretation of the unseen power or powers by the energies of the universe was superseded by one derived from governmental analogies. Then men began to think of the Deity as imaged in the institutions to which they were most directly responsible. Thus the universe came to be regarded as a huge kingdom or empire, of which God was the ruler, a king — awful and majestic, as became the monarch of such a realm.

Slowly these theories were supplanted by another which is the fruit of the scientific investigation of later times. A study of the things which are certified by the senses leads to the perception of unity, not as something demonstrable, but as something required by facts. No microscope is fine enough to detect a spirit in man or in the universe, and yet the presence of something mysterious and spiritual is almost universally acknowledged. Energy, wisdom, intelligence, are believed to be

omnipresent, but how they coexist is not known. We feel the pressure of the facts of life and history; we hear the voices that speak in the spaces and in the silences, but the message which they would communicate is indefinite and indistinct. We are told that the universe implies that the unknown and unknowable principle of unity is the Deity — if there be one. But when we ask, Does unity imply personality? no answer is forthcoming.

Among Christians a new reply is having wide acceptance. To trace the genesis of the school of thought to which I refer is difficult and not essential to my object; but one thing is evident — whether liberal or conservative, evangelical or Ritschlian, it is devotedly Christian. Two teachers more clearly than others whom I know in our time have given form to this answer — Herrmann, of Marburg, and Fairbairn, of Oxford.

Herrmann says: "The person of Jesus is the fact by which God communes with us."¹ When we know the person of Jesus, we know God, but we can know the person of Jesus only as we know his inner life. "Jesus becomes a real power to us when he reveals his inner life to us."² "We, for our part, become conscious of God's communion

¹ *Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 56. ² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

with us by the fact that the person of Jesus reveals itself to us through the power of his inner life.”¹ “But his (the preacher’s) chief aim should be to make visible and active that which alone can be the basis of faith in himself as well as in others. . . . Jesus only, the *inner life* of this man.”² Thus Herrmann teaches that the only way to become acquainted with God is to know or realize the inner life of Jesus, and the only way to do that is by experience. That this is one way of knowing God all Christian thinkers will readily grant, but that it is the only one, or either the simplest or most elemental, I cannot acknowledge. God has spoken through many voices, and the revelation which began when Jesus was born was not the first, nor will it be the last. “The heavens declare the glory of God.”

“The interpretation of God in the terms of the consciousness of Christ may thus be described as the distinctive and differentiating doctrine of the Christian religion.”³ The answers of Herrmann and Fairbairn are essentially the same: to know the nature of God one must know the inner life, or the consciousness, of Christ. But that is not easy. To know the inner life — to see into the consciousness — of any man is no simple task; thus to pene-

¹ *Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 65. ² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³ Fairbairn's *Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 388.

trate into the "inner life" of Jesus Christ, whom none now living ever saw, is a process, to say the least, exceedingly difficult. It would require careful definition and explanation. Who could know whether he was experiencing the inner life of the Christ without first knowing that life? And yet, to know it, we are told, requires experience. Thus we are started on a fatal circle of inquiry. Again, how are we to interpret in the terms of the consciousness of Christ? How may the possession of that consciousness be verified except by that consciousness itself? While they are not satisfactory, these answers contain much truth. He who has entered into the consciousness of Christ does know God, but as a means of interpreting the divine nature this teaching is altogether inadequate. How should the subject be approached? Is not the answer of the Bible sufficient? Yes, when it is understood, but there is wide difference of opinion as to what the Bible really teaches. Moreover, with those who do not recognize the authority of the Christian Scriptures this reply would have no force. The Scriptures throw light on the subject; but they also must be interpreted.

All forms of idealism have answers to our question, but there is no means of testing their accuracy except by what is resident in the mind that speculates. The harmony between the imagination

and its own product is the only standard of measurement which pure idealism possesses.

Another method of arriving at an answer to our inquiry as to the nature of the Deity is The Inductive Method. the inductive. From a study of the seen we rise to the unseen. From what the world and man are, we infer what God is. But does not this reasoning lead to confusion? Are not the processes of history and the forces and activities of the universe double-faced? The light speaks of love; the darkness of gloom. The landscape, with its flowers and the songs of birds, suggests one kind of a being; storms, tidal waves, and earthquakes, with their wake of destruction and death, suggest an altogether different being. The European would have one conception of God, the African another. Environment modifies the mental concepts as well as the physical features. There is only one way to escape the force of this reasoning. < We must find that which is most elemental in the life of man, and in it seek an answer to our inquiry concerning the nature of God. In order of time the first human relation, and the one which makes itself felt to the intelligence before anything else, is parenthood. Before a child thinks of storms or sunset splendors he looks into the depths of loving eyes; before he dreads clouds and darkness he shrinks from a frown on

his parent's face. The first and most elemental of relationships, the nearest and most influential of all factors in the human environment, is covered by the word fatherhood, which really contains all that is signified by the word parenthood. From it are learned the earliest lessons of dependence, authority, responsibility, ministry. In short, all the God that a little child knows is embodied in his parents, and the larger vision of his later years is but the growth and expansion of what is made known through them. Every one has a real, though perhaps dim, understanding of what fatherhood means. It is not only the primary, it is also the most universal of human conceptions of the higher powers. Those who have experienced the inner life of Christ surely know God, but that experience is complex and not easily interpreted. Is there no natural way to reach that knowledge for those who have not had such an experience? Our answer is this: <the vehicle by which the first intimations of the Deity are conveyed, if it is universal, must always be trustworthy.> Those earliest intimations come through parenthood; therefore its voice is the most authoritative concerning the nature of God. Whatever that nature is, it is made known by fatherhood in proportion as it approaches what is commonly regarded as its ideal form. What reveals God once must

always do so, although the contents of the revelation may broaden and deepen with years and experience. Thus we are prepared by what we know of man to find the holiest of human relations used as the medium of the most authoritative divine revelation. Instead, therefore, of saying that the nature of the Deity is disclosed only in the experience of the inner life of the historic Christ, I should say that it is always and everywhere revealed in fatherhood, and that the revelation approaches perfection in proportion as the father is worthy of the sacred name which he bears. Because the first idea of God always comes through the parent, we infer that ideal fatherhood is always a true revelation of the divine. Herrmann says, to know God, one must experience the inner life of Christ. But only a few do that — and men must know something of what God is before they can be expected either to fear or love him. All men through fatherhood receive their first lessons concerning God. Therefore, we say: in what your own heart tells you every father was intended to be multiplied by infinity, behold as clear a manifestation of the contents of the word God as can be conveyed to man.

But let us now inquire what is implied by fatherhood. The first thought is clearly that of identity of nature between two beings. The child and his

parent are two personalities, and yet, what the father is the child is. The second inherits the peculiarities, the temperament, the characteristics, the tendencies, of the one from whom his being is derived. There is a vital connection between them. They are of the same substance and have the same nature, and yet they are two. The branch is not the vine, and yet it is the extension of the vine. The parental relation, when used to interpret God, necessitates the inference that man is of the very nature or substance of the Deity, and yet that he is not Deity — as I am of the nature of my father, but am not my father. Identity of nature between parent and child is essential to the idea of fatherhood.

Contents of
Fatherhood.

Mutual responsibility is also a part of the content of the revelation of fatherhood. By a kind of instinct the child feels his dependence and his responsibility. No formal rules compel a child to bow to the will of the parent ; to do so is as natural and instinctive as for him to breathe. The feeling of responsibility in the child is manifest from the dawn of consciousness. Later we begin to understand that our parents are as truly responsible *for us* as that we are responsible *to them*. They determined our birth ; in large part they made the environment into which we were born ; in a certain real sense they are our

Mutual Re-
sponsibility.

creators. But for them we would never have been. Therefore they have duties to us which are evident, and which usually are joyfully acknowledged and assumed. We render to them loyal obedience—they give to us loving service; and no fidelity on the one side can in the least discharge the obligation which belongs to the other side. The child and the parent have mutual responsibilities. The same is true in the higher relation between man and the unseen power whom we call God. On the one hand worship and obedience are as instinctive as breathing and eating, and the obligation to obey is universal and apparently ineradicable. On the other hand, with the growth of years, the conviction is developed that he who allowed us to exist, who determined our heritage and our associations, has himself an obligation to us as real as ours to him. By every consideration of righteousness and justice, he is bound to seek to make existence for his creatures a blessing and not a curse.

Every child in every true home is born into an atmosphere of love. This is so much a matter of course that at first it is hardly appreciated. Childhood is the manifestation of love. A little child is at once the simplest and the profoundest example of what love requires and what it inspires. Even before reason is able to make an inference, love begins its unconscious ministries, and it never

ceases; for even when death separates bodies, memory binds spirits in bonds which are deathless. Love also is mutual. "We love him because he first loved us," is forever true. The parent pours his heart-wealth around his child; the child, almost before consciousness dawns, begins to return love for love. Thus the divinest fact of which we know is forever coming into new forms of manifestation. Fatherhood thrills with love; childhood responds to the appeal of love with love. And so the eternal poem is being written in terms of life, and loses none of its music as the years go by. To a child the divinest being known is his father, who shares his nature, yet who is above him. When we first approach the Unseen on whom we feel ourselves dependent, it is natural and inevitable to believe him to be like the one on whom we evidently depend, and to whom we already feel that we are responsible; and that reasoning leads straight to fatherhood, and therefore to love, which is without limit or bound and immortal.

◀ Thus a study of the most nearly universal and elemental of human relations justifies the conviction that all men are of the same substance as the One who gave them being; that they are responsible to Him and He to them; that He loves as naturally as the sun shines, and wins love as naturally as the gardens respond to the light. ➤

Does the conclusion we have now reached harmonize with the teaching of Scripture?

The Teaching of the Scriptures. The harmony is complete. In the New Testament the name Father is applied to Deity (chiefly by Jesus) 256 times. No other name has such frequent use. The only other often mentioned is God, and that on the lips of Jesus is usually associated with Father. In the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded by Matthew, "Father" appears seventeen times, and with almost equal frequency in other parts of the Gospel. In Mark the name appears four times. In the Gospel according to Luke, again the word is often used; while it shines from every page of the Gospel according to John. In the Acts and the Epistles "Father" does not so frequently appear. The very thought of God in the writings of Paul was overshadowed by his immense enthusiasm for Christ. He is so possessed by Christ that he seldom attempts to interpret God in any other term, but when the word Father is used by him, it is in a peculiarly emphatic sense. In Rom. xv. 6, he speaks of "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" in 1 Cor. viii. 6, in a significant passage, he uses the word as a term of definition, "One God, the Father;" in 2 Cor. i. 3, he writes "the Father of mercies;" in Eph. i. 17, "the Father of glory;" iv. 6, "God and Father;" v. 20, "God,

even the Father." The salutations in the Pauline epistles all refer to "Father," and the reference in those instances surely is general. In the membership of the early churches were many who could be called Christians only by courtesy, like the incestuous man at Corinth; but they were all included in the salutation. In the Epistle to the Hebrews there are but two references to the "Father," and the Epistle of James contains the word but twice. Peter uses it four times, and always in a general sense. When once more the writings of John are reached, the name emerges as prominent as before. In the Epistles of John, "Father" has no limited meaning as if intended to apply only to a few. It is as wide as humanity. In 1 John ii. 1, we read of the "Advocate with the Father." Advocate may be the possession of those who believe, but Father is a universal name. In the Revelation the word appears five times.

A comparative study of the preceding references is instructive. "Father is almost the only ✓
 word used by Jesus when speaking of the Deity; ✓
 (✓) it is almost the only word found in those books ✓
 which contain an account of his life and teachings.
 (✓) Its use is equally frequent and characteristic by ✓
 the apostle who was nearest to him and who best
 knew his mind. (✓) In the books most Christian it is
 found most frequently, while in those most colored

by Judaism it seldom appears. James was the Jew among the New Testament writers, and in his letter the name is found but twice. (1) The Gospel according to John is peculiarly the Gospel of Fatherhood. That was written latest of all the books of the New Testament; and if John knew much of the writings of the other apostles, it is not an unwarranted inference that his peculiar and reiterated emphasis may have been intentional, in view of the fact that fatherhood did not have the place to which it was entitled in what may be called the Judaic epistles. Whether this hypothesis be correct or not, the fact that the idea and name of Father dominate all the Gospels, and the Epistles of John, is beyond question.

But we are met with the assertion that, while the name Father is often applied to the Deity, he is represented in the New Testament as the Father of believers only. This may be answered in two ways. The essence of fatherhood is the giving of life. If all men owe their being to God, then he is their Father, and has upon him the responsibilities of fatherhood. But a careful examination of the circumstances attending the use of the word Father shows that it will allow no such narrow interpretation. The Sermon on the Mount may have been addressed to the disciples only, or to the multitude — that matters

Is God Father of Believers only?

7
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little. The disciples were not good enough at that time to be the especial favorites of the Almighty. There were quite as choice spirits outside that band as within it. James and John, who, even under the shadow of the cross, were to seek the rich offices in the kingdom; Peter, who was to deny him; and Judas, who was to betray him, were all alike taught to pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven." The nearest definition of God to which Paul ever came was, "One God, the Father." Because a Christian to-day speaks of "the Father," or "our Father," it does not follow that he means to be understood that he is the Father of Christians alone; and when the New Testament writers use the word, it has the largest meaning. It is not surprising that the Epistles are less clear at this point than the Gospels, for the former tell us concerning him of whom the Apostles thought most, namely, the Master, Christ; while the Gospels tell us of whom Jesus thought and talked most, namely, God the Father.

But the frequency with which the word Father appears is not so significant as the relations in which it appears. In the only form in which the doctrine of the Trinity has any expression, Father always has the first place; baptism was always to be first in the name of the Father; when Jesus taught men to pray, it was to the Father;

Disciples
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Relationship
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when he taught the doctrine of Providence, he said, "Your heavenly Father feedeth them;" when he taught the nature of God in the parable of the Prodigal Son, he showed the Father in an act of forgiveness; when he unrolled the panorama of the judgment, he showed the Father in the midst of its terrors; when he first declared himself the Messiah, he spoke of the Father to a Samaritan woman three times; the promise is that the Comforter shall come from the Father; the Advocate is with the Father; death is robbed of its sting when Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many mansions;" and Paul declares that when Christ at last shall give up his kingdom it will be into the Father's hands. Thus nearly all, if not all, the teaching in the New Testament which is most vital and fundamental is stated in terms of fatherhood. < The reason for this is not far to find. The words "king" and "emperor" had horrible and cruel associations. The former suggested Herod, and the latter Cæsar, and both were hateful. The word God is meaningless; it suggests the infinite and everlasting, the nebulous and awful, but sheds no light on essential being. Jesus might have used any other word as well as God, for it only points toward the unknown. But the meaning of Father all understood then, and will forever understand. > Its significance is as rich and evident

to the peasant as to the philosopher. No other name at once so accurate and so easily comprehended, so simple and yet so profoundly significant, could have been selected. If we may so speak, it is the natural and elemental name for the Deity. It is not easily misinterpreted when the human relationship even remotely suggests its ideal significance.

When fatherhood is associated with the Deity it fittingly assumes the phrase of the Apostles' Creed, "God, the Father Almighty." Then it is no common or small word. It expresses more than sentiment. In its most limited meaning it implies the austere as well as the tender, the just as well as the loving. In this its largest use these qualities of being are expanded to infinity. At the heart of the universe, transcending it and yet pervading it, directing the affairs of men and equally the sweep of the constellations, the governing principle of human history and also of the cosmic energies in all the ages, is the essence of fatherhood, infinite, all-embracing, everlasting — this is the truth bound up in that phrase, "the Father Almighty."

The ideal fatherhood necessitates holiness. When Jesus said, "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," he asserted the absolute holiness of the Father. Holiness is as essential to fatherhood as is love. A

Implies
Holiness as
well as Love.

*Fatherhood
makes sure that
love is at the heart
of the universe.*

true father is as anxious to save his child from being wrong as from suffering. Justice and love are only opposite sides of the same attribute; they cannot be separated. Wrong and error put as heavy a burden on fatherhood as do sorrow and pain. An earthly father will not long allow in his household anything which is evil or unjust; if it is tolerated at all, it is only in order that it may be so removed as to cause the least friction; but it must go, and as soon as is consistent with all the interests which should be conserved. However its existence may be accounted for, the Almighty Father, because of His holiness, can permit sin and suffering only so long as may be necessary to accomplish the best purposes for the universe. As to when those purposes will be achieved, and by what methods holiness will be victorious, we may speculate, but with our present vision we may not know. The central and controlling motive in fatherhood is love — and love in proportion to its perfection is mixed with holiness. Fatherhood is always ethical as well as emotional. Omnipotence, holiness, love, are three words which are bound together in any adequate description of the Heavenly Father.

The full content and significance of the Divine Fatherhood can be but dimly comprehended. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. "Now we see

through a glass darkly." But this truth points toward an interpretation of the life of the individual, of the universe, of history, which is of inconceivable glory. It implies perfect holiness and perfect love in the hands of Omnipotence. The Father is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Therefore all the ages and all the events of the past have been directed by love toward holiness; therefore no creature has ever been outside the reach of His love or the sweep of His holiness; therefore not only this world, but all worlds have been administered by love in the interests of holiness; therefore the one far-off divine event must be the sway of holiness in every creature and in every part of the universe.

But many objections are raised against these conclusions. All that has been said is acknowledged to be true, but it is claimed Objections. that the induction is incomplete. We are reminded that if the contents of fatherhood are to be learned from the human relationship, the fact can hardly be evaded that in the majority of homes fatherhood is not associated with holiness, and implies instinctive rather than intelligent and rational love. That is true. In humanity fatherhood is perhaps quite as often an accident as the result of choice. How can such grim facts be evaded? and, much more, how can they be explained? Moreover, there

is another side to nature and history than the one thus far presented. Even if love and justice do dominate the household, by what fiction can they be said to rule in society? The state punishes the weak and unfortunate as if they were responsible for the acts for which they suffer. What element of justice is exhibited when a poor, frail woman who, in a fit of shame and desperation, has smothered a new-born child, is brought to punishment for what she would never have done if she had been in the circumstances of those who pass judgment? The violence in nature; the calamities which destroy thousands of lives in a moment; the pestilence, and, perhaps most of all, the principle of murder, by which man and beast alike are "red in tooth and claw," — how can these incontestable and terrible realities be reconciled with fatherhood at the heart of things? I do not at this time attempt to answer these questions, but I do not ignore them. They cannot be evaded; but whether they may be adequately answered is an altogether different question. This much at least may be said at this time: neglect, cruelty, accidental fatherhood are not essential and elemental in the idea of fatherhood. Among the most barbaric peoples are rudiments of holiness and love which, if they have opportunity, always grow and become sovereign. Even where these qualities are not found, they

are recognized as essential to the true conception of fatherhood. Ideals alone are prophetic of what ought to be and will be. The ideals of savages are often right when knowledge and ability to realize them are defective.

A study of civilized and also of the less perfectly developed races shows that even among them, before natural phenomena inspire awe and worship, the sanctity of fatherhood is felt; that it is the nearest, the most elemental, and the most constant factor in the life of the child; that from it the first ideas of Deity are derived; that parent and child have the same nature, although they are not identically the same beings, and that the feeling of dependence and responsibility on the part of the child is quickly followed by one of obligation on the part of the parent, because he is the author of the existence of his child. We conclude therefore that men and God are the same in substance, though not identical as individuals; that they have reciprocal obligations — the one of obedience, and the other of service. So much results from a study of fatherhood in human life. These conclusions harmonize with the teaching of Jesus. Almost the only name he ever used when speaking of God was Father. Fatherhood, when applied to God, must signify the same that it does in human relations, or the word is meaningless. But

while it signifies the same in both spheres, in the former its contents are multiplied by the distance between the finite and imperfect and the infinite and perfect. The perfect being must be perfectly holy and loving. In the ideal human fatherhood we have the clearest conception of Deity which it is possible for man to understand. As we better appreciate the prophecies of our own nature, we shall have a worthier appreciation of the grandeur and compassion, the holiness and love, of Him whose perfection may be forever approached, but never can be fully comprehended. It is easier and safer to try to understand the meaning and prophecy of fatherhood than to seek to experience the inner life of Jesus. The key which he used to unlock the most majestic of mysteries is the one which he would have his followers use.

My conclusion, then, is as follows: We may know God in his essential nature — what
 Conclusion. He is apart from the fact that He is — by a realization of the significance of the relation between parent and child. This knowledge is within the reach of all, since all are children or parents, or both. The nearest and most elemental relation in humanity may be trusted when through it come revelations of the nature of Deity. This is the Christian method of investigation, because it was the one followed and sanctioned by the

Christ. His message harmonizes with the results of a study of human life, and both emphasize what I believe should be the governing principle in all theology — Interpret God by fatherhood.

IV

THE BASIS OF OPTIMISM

PESSIMISM and Optimism are quite as much results of temperament as of study or observation. The bilious and dyspeptic are almost always pessimists ; while those physically well are as frequently optimists. But the questions of pessimism and optimism cannot be answered by any physiological experiments. They would never have grown into philosophical systems and become the distinguishing characteristics of religions, with millions of believers, if there were not something which seemed to give them a basis in reason. Whatever theory commands wide acceptance has existence because it is apparently reasonable. Individuals may be willing to believe lies, but masses of men never are. They may be deceived for a time, but they need only light to prefer truth to error. Pessimism and optimism represent two opposite ways of interpreting human life and the universe. The reasons for these diverse interpretations are many and some of them obscure.

Pessimists are of many classes. Some think

only of themselves; and others from their personal dissatisfaction conclude that there is no good anywhere, and, consequently, ^{Pessimism.} that there has been nothing desirable in the past, and can be nothing worth anticipation in the future. Schopenhauer held that the universe itself is utterly bad — not that it has been good and that the harmony is now broken, but that in its very essence it is evil and only evil. The old theologians used to teach that this is the best possible moral system; he held that there is no moral system, and that everything is utterly and irretrievably miserable. Von Hartman was equally pessimistic in his outlook, but he was willing to allow that the universe was the best possible — but that was saying nothing, since the best was inconceivably bad. Such theories imply not only wretchedness in the mass, but also in all individuals. No life is worth living on the earth, and there is no hope of anything better beyond. The processes of history show few signs of intelligence, and still fewer of love. The universe is without meaning and without promise. Men are only like feathers blown on winds which come, no one knows whence, and go, none can tell whither. Byron has put into doleful music the creed of Pessimism: —

“Count o’er the joys thine hours have seen,
 Count o’er thy days from anguish free,
 And know, whatever thou hast been,
 ’T is something better not to be.”¹

Optimism. Optimism is the exact reverse of pessimism. It holds that life itself is a blessing, and that it moves toward larger horizons in the years to come. It does not shut its eyes to sorrow, suffering, and the apparent defeat of truth and right; it sees clearly the mistakes and sins, and the widespread desolations which have been wrought by them, but it believes that the moral order is organized for blessing; that no individual is allowed to suffer without that suffering being made a possibility of benefit; that the ills which men endure have relations to larger ends some time to be realized, and therefore that even the bitterest experiences, and the processes leading to those experiences which seem so needlessly harsh, are justified by the results sure to be achieved. To the pessimist the creation is an infinite complexity of blind, resistless and remorseless forces which grind the rich and the poor alike, without haste and without rest. To the optimist it is the embodiment of the absolute reason and love; the nature of things is beneficent; human hearts are not ground like grist in infinite mills; but every pang of suffering and

¹ Byron, *Euthanasia*.

every sigh of sorrow are means by which perfect love accomplishes benefit for the individual, the race, and the whole created universe.

There is a great gulf fixed between these two theories. While they are in part the result of temperamental conditions, something far more radical must be sought as the cause of their divergence.

Before turning to that, it will be well to seek to understand on what grounds pessimism justifies itself to the reason. How Pessimism justifies Itself. The grounds are three, namely, the testimony of those who have found existence a failure, personal experience, and observation. The pessimists — and their number is legion — insist that suffering and sorrow are universal, and balanced by no compensations. They attempt to prove this by the testimony of those who have lived in different lands, and who have been separated by centuries. Their motto is the words which Homer puts into the mouth of Zeus: —

“The race of mortal men,
Of all that breathe and move upon the earth,
Is the most wretched.”¹

Their favorite poets are Omar Khayyám, Byron, and Goethe. As to certain phases of experience these writers may be competent witnesses, but their

¹ *The Iliad*, book 17.

testimony is of no value concerning life in its larger relations. Of all the dreary platitudes which a dissolute man ever mustered energy to write, the "Rubáiyát" of Omar Khayyám is the dreariest, the most senseless, and the most debasing. "It is remarkable that pessimistic sentiments abound in voluptuous poets."¹ The reason for this is that their thought is centred on the gratification of sensual desires. The pleasure which they seek quickly passes and leaves enervation and lassitude behind. This is the soil in which dark thoughts take root and grow. Of all the poets of pessimism only Goethe had a knowledge of life large enough to make him a trustworthy witness, and his knowledge was more than balanced by his moral obliquity, which was all the worse because against light.

Some writers in all ages have seen only the dark side of things, but, with the possible exception of Goethe, they have never been in the highest rank. Omar, Byron, Goethe, find little in the human experience but sickness, suffering, foulness, and the ruin of virtue by vice. There is a school of novelists also, of which, perhaps, George Eliot is the most illustrious example, which sees in life only malignant forces working out malignant purposes. But men of supreme vision have never been pessi-

¹ Harris, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, vol. i. p. 251.

mists, unless Buddha be excepted, — and of his personal teachings little is known. Homer was not a pessimist, or we should never have had the triumph of virtue in *The Odyssey*, and the crime of Paris worthily punished as in *The Iliad*. Dante saw written over the entrance to hell, “All hope abandon, ye who enter here;” but beyond the *Inferno* he found the *Paradiso*, and as the crown and glory of humanity, “the perfected will,” — a peace attainable by all.

Milton was not content until he had written the *Paradise Regained*. There is more for all than a *Paradise Lost*. Browning and Tennyson, the two sublimest singers of the century and among the noblest of all time, both believed that —

“ ’Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.”

“Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die” is the note to which pessimism is keyed. Many voices bewail the miseries of existence, and many eyes can see nothing before them but the grave; but those voices have a hollow sound, and under the eyes are the deep dark circles which distinguish the voluptuary.

There is testimony that favors pessimism, but it is partial, and represents neither the best thought nor the purest morality.

But the pessimist makes reply: "We are not dependent for proof on the testimony of others; we see and know the facts, and they cannot be gainsaid. We have felt the fire in our own bodies. Sorrows exceed joys a thousand-fold." Here we touch those who have suffered deeply, and whose physical and mental agony can neither be explained away nor greatly minimized. "Moreover turn your eyes outward and survey the world. Think of the pain of the brute creation, with its awful dumb misery; think of the disappointment, the sickness, the physical suffering, the mental anguish, the loneliness, the heart ache and the heart breaking which fill the existence of man; and then say, if you can, that there is anywhere a prophecy of better things. Think of the millions even now imperfectly developed! Think of the sickness and the suffering that so greatly abound! Think of the miseries of childhood! Listen to the 'Cry of the Children' and the 'Cry of the Human,' and then answer, Is the joy of life equal to the sorrow and suffering? But even if it were not, it could be endured if there were any prospect of relief in the future; but the future must be judged by the past and the present. There is little which prophesies blessing in any of the experiences of humanity. The race may slowly improve, but the processes of evolution, like infinite Juggernaut-

wheels, grind beneath them the hopes and loves of millions of individuals who go down in order that the mass may be perfected."

This reasoning of the pessimist may be well founded or not, but it is hard to meet for the simple reason that it is almost impossible to change the conviction of one whose conclusions have been reached through feeling rather than by argument. "I have seen and felt the bitterness of life" is a statement with which only a wise man can deal.

The conviction that life is essentially evil was at the basis of Stoicism, and it is still pre-
Pessimism wide-spread.
valent throughout the Orient. The Persians were so impressed with the hopeless miseries of existence that Zoroaster imagined that the sovereignty of the universe was divided between two Gods, one evil and one good, and that eternal warfare was waged between them. The faiths of India, and of others which originated there, are all pervaded by a hopeless melancholy. One division of Buddhists teaches that true wisdom is the realization of the nothingness of things; and another division teaches that enlightenment comes only to those who first have learned that existence is essentially miserable. These two articles of faith appear in one way or another in most forms of Hindu and Buddhist religion. Nirvana, whether in Hindu or Buddhist thought, and whether it mean the

destruction of the personality, the disintegration of what is called the Ego, or the cessation of the pains of transmigration, is the blessed relief which is reached by those who have learned that the cause of suffering is existence. The Hindus and Buddhists as a class are pessimists. Some of them say that the only way to escape from misery is to deny its reality, and the others insist that the only door out of misery is cessation of conscious being. Is not the generous hospitality which western countries give to these faiths due to the fact that the burden of suffering rests so largely on western minds also?

Whatever the explanation of isolated experiences, the argument by which pessimism justifies itself is threefold: the testimony of others as to the outlook, as embodied in literature -- especially poetry and philosophy; personal experience of suffering with no hope of escape; observation of how life and the universe appear to those living in our time. This is the argument offered. But the causes of pessimism, other than such as are found in the temperament, in physical disease, and in the constancy of suffering, lie much deeper. Where shall they be found?

Pessimism is almost a necessity where there is faith neither in God nor in a future life. The gloom of existence without this light is illustrated

in the drama of Job, which is the sublimest study of human suffering, and the causes of it, that the world contains. A man suffers One Cause of Pessimism. enough to crush one who is less strong, and the suffering is without any apparent cause. His friends gather around him, and aggravate his misery with the hard and cruel theology and philosophy which teach that suffering is always a sign of divine displeasure. That teaching forces the inquiry as to what kind of a Deity He must be who can allow such penalties when there has been no conscious wrongdoing. The result is that Job appears to the men of his time to be an infidel who merits his fate. He repudiates their God; and his case is utterly dark until two faint gleams of light give encouragement. The first is the conviction that if there is a God there must some time be an explanation of what seems to be inexplicable. He cries, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" The second is in the suggestion that life may not end with death: "If a man die, shall he live again?" If so, unseen forces may work to beneficent ends. Job was a pessimist, and with good reason, until he became convinced of the possibility of a just God and of a future life. From that moment what had been only dim and faint suggestions of light began to expand into broad rays. Then even his sufferings were seen

to have meaning, and he could declare in the most magnificent optimism which has ever found expression: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

The book of Job is typical. Pessimism is a necessary and logical conclusion if there is no God and no future life. Faith in both is essential to a rational and enduring optimism. I do not mean that there are not many optimists who are convinced of neither, but I am sure that their optimism is temperamental rather than rational. < If there is no Providential order of the world, then men are as likely to suffer as to be happy, and there is no meaning in their pains. > Suffering, which is sure to work toward a beneficent end, may be endured. Hope sustains those who without it would be crushed. Let us suppose that this universe is an infinite and everlasting machine, or an ocean of matter and force without bound, without intelligence, without love — other than such as may be found in human beings. Into the midst of these hot furnaces, or into the midst of these multitudinous waves, a sensitive, aspiring, loving child is born. He grows to manhood, by some good luck escaping suffering. But at last the trouble begins. All around are forces from which he cannot escape. He is like a man imprisoned between flying wheels which every mo-

Pessimism
inevitable
when there
is no Faith
in God.

ment approach closer, or like one tossed on waves which hourly become more cruel. He steps one side, and a hand is crushed ; another side, and a foot is wounded ; forward, and his head is gashed ; backward, and he is met by a heavy blow. He feels that he is made for something better, but only now and then is any relief allowed him. He begins to ask questions. Is there anything outside these wheels ? "No : only wheels rolling everywhere and forever." Is there any Being strong enough to reach down and stop this remorseless whirl ? "No, there is no one greater than the wheels ; no one started them, and no one can stop them." Is there no hope ? "No hope." Then why should I not throw myself beneath the heaviest at once, and so end this mockery ? And we echo, Why not ? This is not an unfair or exaggerated statement of what life is to many in many lands. For a while they escape severe suffering, but soon it begins. They are twinged by rheumatism and racked by neuralgia ; they are disappointed ; they love and love is not returned ; they win a position and then lose all ; they are ambitious and forever defeated ; they feel able to do great things and are allowed opportunity to do nothing ; they are like birds beating themselves against their cages : thus they grow old ; the snows fall on their heads and dimness comes into their

eyes, but the ambition is as young and the heart as tender as ever. Let one such stop and ask a few questions. What is the meaning of all this limitation and suffering, this buffeting and constant defeat, this physical and mental agony? "It has no meaning." No meaning! why then is it allowed? "It is not allowed — it just is, that is all, and all inquiries as to how and why are useless." Is there no one who can interfere and protect me? I did not bring myself here. I am not suffering for wrong which I have done. "There is no one; beyond the forces of what we call nature there is neither intelligence nor heart." But how will this end? If by and by there is to be accomplished some good purpose, I will be as brave as possible. "There is no good purpose to be accomplished. After a while you will get so that you can endure it no longer, and then you will lie down and die — and that will be all." Why not lie down and die now, and so make an end of the farce and save yet years of suffering? And I cannot help echoing, Why not? Pessimism is logical and usually inevitable where there is faith neither in God nor in the future life.

But suppose that when the man who feels that he has endured all that a human being can endure asks his searching question, a strong clear voice which he can reasonably trust responds: "Yes;

there is One whose eyes are never removed from you ; He will not allow you to be tested above what you are able to bear, and He permits what you are now suffering because in that way only can the finest and most enduring character be developed. You are being made stronger and better, more intelligent, more loving, of more robust and resolute will." Well, that is good so far as it goes ; but what is the use of perfection of character if after a few years I am simply to die and be buried ? Why should I care to be better ? and why should He care to have me better if all that is before me is death and extinction ? The game is not worth the candle. The voice continues : " But death cannot touch spirit ; and the suffering of which you complain, and which is bitter, is only discipline ; and not one sob of sorrow, not one tear of grief, and not one twinge of pain are allowed that may not be utilized to fit you for a brighter and happier time when the spirit shall no longer be in the body." And is that the meaning of what I am enduring ? Is there One caring for me whose love never fails ? whose intelligence and wisdom are absolute ? and who cannot be defeated ? And is my being as endless as His ? " These things are even so." Then I can be patient ; then I can kiss the rod as it falls, for I know that perfect love can permit

The Effect
of Faith in
God and the
Future Life.

nothing that may not be used to promote the welfare of any creature. If man lives beyond what we call death, there is time enough for the reversal of what now seems only dark and unjust.

We are thus led to ask, What is the problem of Optimism? Stated in the simplest terms The Problem of Optimism. it is to answer the question, Is life worth living? But this inquiry is not easy to meet. In its larger relations optimism, with its eyes wide open to all that surely is evil, cruel, hateful, wicked, has still to justify the universe; to show that even the processes through which men are passing are themselves justified by the results to be obtained. This is something very different from the happy-go-easy way of looking at things which characterizes many people who shut their eyes to what they do not like, and declare that everything is beautiful because they will not see anything that is ugly. There are temperamental optimists as there are temperamental pessimists. The one cannot see any evil anywhere; the other cannot see any good, and both are equally blind and false in their conclusions.

If optimism has any justification, what is the problem which it faces in view of what the individual and corporate life of man is, and in view of what the universe is? It has to show that what seems evil in the life of the individual, like suffer-

ing and even sin, are not to be estimated by what they are in themselves; that they are means toward benefit and blessing — both for the individual and the race. (It has to show that what seems cruel and imperfect in nature has larger ends, and that those ends are beneficent. Moreover, while recognizing the awful and constant factors of suffering and sin, it has to show that the “nature of things” is on the side of truth and benefit, and that somehow and somewhere all that now appears to be hostile to man will be seen to be friendly, and helpful toward the higher and blessed levels.) This is a task of no small magnitude; and yet, one which must be performed if the life of man is to be more than a farce, and the progress of the race is to continue. Here we meet a prophetic truth: the faith that progress is a reality which no forces can long hinder shows that in the depths of their being men do believe that the prize to be won is worth the struggle. If we deny this with our words, we often affirm it by our deeds. It is an interesting fact that the living religions of the world are those which are most optimistic. The missionary religions are the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, and the Christian. The Buddhists are supposed to be confirmed pessimists, and they are; but the most aggressive sect of northern Buddhism is the Shin Shiu, which compared with all the other sects, and

indeed with all other forms of Indian religion, is hopeful of a blessed consummation for the individual and the race. It holds that the "Western Paradise" is a state of conscious existence, of progress and happiness. This belief has supplanted the common teaching concerning the unconsciousness and monotony of Nirvana. Mohammedanism and Christianity are both essentially optimistic.

The importance of a wise and clear solution of problems which optimism faces is apparent. There will be no long-continued progress without an adequate motive. Such motive cannot coexist with the belief that the universe is essentially heartless; that individual life has no outlook; that suffering and sorrow are ends in themselves and not means for the realization of some high and fine purpose. If there is no place for hopes like these, then the universe is a prison-house and "life is woe" indeed.

But whatever may have been the experience of exceptional individuals, this much is evident, — the race as a whole has not been thus pessimistic. The youth of succeeding generations have been educated and trained as if they had before them immortal possibilities, and when they have reached maturity they have worked, explored, sacrificed, as if it were worth while to do something and be something in this present human life. Their instincts

have been more rational than their faiths. Where the mind has said, "I cannot see," the heart has responded, "I have felt."

The problem of religion is to show that the rational and necessary interpretation of life and the universe is that of optimism; that pessimism is irrational; that it contradicts facts; and that it is the worst enemy of the human race. There is wisdom in the Apostle's words, "We are saved by hope." When hope dies, everything else worth living for dies also. The problem of optimism is the problem of religion and of ethics. There is no basis for ethics if this is not a moral world; and if it is a cruel and heartless world it is surely an immoral world. There is no reason in prayer, in sacrifice, in service, in worship, in words of comfort by death-beds and gravesides, if we are all dwellers in a realm of Cimmerian darkness, without horizon and without stars. Therefore he is the greatest benefactor of his kind who is able to show that there is a rational and enduring basis for the belief that what seems heartless and cruel is only because those who are absorbed with present experiences can seldom see the end toward which they are pressing. Life is much like a passage through a tunnel. The little child is in terror, because of the darkness and the roar of the train, until one with larger experience

The Problem
of Religion.

calms his fears with the assurance that the tunnel is the shortest and safest way from the light behind to the brighter beauties which will quickly appear.

With the problem of optimism now clearly in mind we are ready for the inquiry which has waited impatiently for an answer: What is the basis of Optimism? Jesus was the supreme optimist. That was because He had clear vision. Faber says: "The hardest of all griefs to bear is a grief that is not sure." Without clear light at one point hope is impossible and absurd; with light at that point it is reasonable and inevitable. Is this universe in the hands of intelligent love? or has it been created and swayed by fate and chance? Is the life of the individual always within the leashes of intelligent love? or is man like a leaf on the wind, blown wherever the wayward gusts may determine? In previous chapters we have seen that the only rational interpretation of the universe and of life is that which may be called the paternal. This the instincts and longings of the race demand and prophesy; and that these prophecies are correct is clearly affirmed by the Christian revelation. Indeed, its optimism is the strongest proof of the divinity of that revelation. Given one fact, and the problem before us solves itself, life has meaning, and history becomes

The Basis of
Optimism.

optimism

the orderly progression of wise plans toward beneficent ends. That fact is, all things are in the hands of an infinite Father. We may believe in evolution, but if evolution is in the hands of the Fatherhood it is growth toward love and holiness, and no individual will be crushed by the processes. When God is assumed or proved, as the case may be, and is interpreted by fatherhood, two conclusions immediately, and of necessity, follow: everything is in accordance with a loving, intelligent, and omnipotent purpose; and the child, by virtue of his nature, will live as long as the One from whom his being is derived. If this is true, that which we call life is related to the whole human career as the utmost crest of a wave to the ocean. All the meaning and purpose to be realized by us can be crowded into no threescore and ten career. Browning has said that this life is our one chance of learning love; but there are other things to learn besides love, and things of whose existence we have not yet even dreamed. Such knowledge will require other spheres and ages of experience, and what seems cruel here may become glorious by and by. The life of a seed underground is not its whole existence, but it is essential to the glory and beauty of a garden; the dry chrysalis is not a very inspiring sight, but it precedes the golden wings that are soon to be spread in the sunlight.

The basis of optimism is faith in such a God as was revealed in Christ — God interpreted by fatherhood. Nothing more is required, and nothing less will satisfy. If God pervading all things, controlling all things, determining all things, never wearying, never slumbering, never overlooking, never growing old, and abiding forever, is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — that is all we need to know, since then truth and benefit and love must be the heritage of individuals, of the race, and of all the ages.

This does not explain the processes by which we are disciplined, but it makes it possible for us to wait in confidence. Why do I suffer? I do not know, but I can trust that no ill can come from Him. Why are hearts broken, homes dismembered, and the whole world mounded with graves? We know not; but behind them all is perfect love, and, therefore, we trust that some time and “somehow good will be the goal of ill.” Jesus teaches that life, death, judgment, time, eternity, all men, all things, — everything is pervaded by God; that His purpose is over all; that God is the Father of all; and consequently that a household in which the father watches over his children, works for them, serves them, sacrifices for them, dies for them, is the world in miniature; that the universe is the Father’s house, and that no child

ever has been or ever can be beyond the sway of His love and care.

Pessimism disappears and optimism comes in radiant and regnant with the revelation of God as the Father Almighty.

When God and the universe are interpreted in this the only way Jesus ever interpreted them, the life of the individual is seen to be in accordance with a divine and therefore beneficent plan. But how do you explain this loss, and that disappointment? Why am I forced to exist a bundle of bare nerves exposed to dust and heat? Why are hopes disappointed and cherished plans defeated? Why am I compelled to tread a dreary treadmill between the cradle and the grave? He would be foolish who should seek to reply to such questions, which are always an exaggeration and distortion of the facts. No man can give an adequate answer. As in our earthly homes the children are led through disappointment and apparent loss toward larger life and better possessions by unfailing love, so in the darkness and storm every man is led by love that knows no favor and cannot fail. He who trusts to that revelation will praise God for everything; he who does not believe in it may be a Stoic, and may bear what comes as a cliff endures storms, but he will have no light, no joy, and no hope. Fatherhood is uni-

Individuals
in the
Father's
Hands.

versal and eternal, therefore every man's life must be a plan of God. To recognize and live by that truth is wisdom which can never be transcended. Then there are no favorites; then the end will justify the process by which every man is disciplined and so fitted for his immortality.

When the universe and God are interpreted by
History in
the Hands of
Fatherhood. fatherhood, history is seen to be a world-movement in the interests of love, and all events to be moving toward a consummation which may well be called "the Golden Age." A short period of time usually confuses the student. Acts of violence, selfishness, moral and physical evil, are so near that they lead to the mistake that they are more numerous and powerful than they actually are. I have elsewhere observed that historical students are usually optimists, while philosophers and poets are sometimes pessimists. The reason is not far to find. The former take long views, they study centuries; while the latter consider things in their little horizons. The decades are often dark while the centuries are bright. Taken by themselves, such periods as the massacre of St. Bartholomew, or of the Thirty Years' War, seem to be set on fire of hell. The martyrs of the Inquisition may well have wondered whether there was any God in heaven or on earth; but we who look backward can see that such human butchers

as Torquemada and the Duke of Alva were overruled, and made to help the progress of liberty and brotherhood. Every martyr-fire around the body of a saint who is called a heretic has helped toward religious liberty; and every drop of blood shed by tyrants has proved a rich investment in the cause of individual freedom. Nothing is more easily verified than that injustice is usually overruled in the interests of humanity. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, and of many other good causes also. History is like a broad stream into which Christianity entered as a thread-like line of pure water. Slowly the mass of tears and blood has grown smaller and that line of pure water broader; and as it moves still onward the process of purification is constantly hastened. But now the question arises, What warrant have we that the course of this stream will not be deflected, and that it will not once more become turbid and foul? Here optimism has its answer. History follows ever a predestined course. He who determines its channel is a Being of perfect wisdom and absolute love. Nothing goes by chance. If a star or a man could have absolute independence, everything might soon be in confusion. The apparent confusion in history is due to the fact that man has a measure of freedom, while the star is held closely to the sweep of

its orbit; but ever outside the freedom of man is the purpose of God, and that must be good or there is no God, for a God who is not perfect is no God.

But do you know there is a God? The affirmative answer to that question is assumed in this chapter. On no other hypothesis is any light on human life's mystery possible. What satisfactorily solves the most difficult of problems, which otherwise would be insoluble, it is no presumption to assume as a fundamental reality. Given God, who is truly interpreted by fatherhood, and it requires no special revelation, nor peculiarly prophetic vision, to see that the stream of history will go on growing purer and sweeter, until it will be like the river of God which flows from out the midst of the throne. Some time all that is bestial will be eliminated from humanity, and the child of God made a fit and worthy companion for his Father. True, this is imagination, but it is imagination inspired by fact and guided by a logical necessity. When it is realized that the universe is pervaded by fatherhood; that the God who is immanent in the creation is not a mere abstraction or a vague sentiment, but a strong and tender personality, then our physical environment is no longer regarded as a prison-house. Heaven not only lies about us in

Existence
of God
assumed.

our infancy, but it follows us until the body is laid aside and after. The severe and mysterious facts of nature are not here explained away. The earthquake, the tornado, the tidal wave, the lightning and the thunder, as well as all subtle miasms, are as dreadful as ever, but they are only mysteries which wait for explanation. The tidal waves are few, and most people never hear of them; tornadoes are awful phenomena, but insignificant when compared with the clear shining of the sun through countless days; miasms stab in the day and the night, but usually they attack only those who invite attack, and it is not inconceivable, where they are not the result of unsanitary conditions for which man is responsible, that they may serve beneficent ends. If there were no other revelation, a little study would show the beneficence of the nature of things. When the tidal waves, the earthquakes, the tornadoes, and all that works violence and suffering, are balanced against what is bright and beautiful; against the mountains with their awful grandeur, and the gardens with their blossoms and perfumes; against the forests, with their bushes aflame with God and unconsumed; and when we add the days of cloudless skies and those made glorious by the intermingling of cloud and light; when we balance against all the evil, all the beauty, the grandeur, all that makes for health and

happiness, all that ministers to human welfare, it is impossible to believe that the nature of things is not benevolent and beneficent. And when there is added to this the faith that the universe is the palace of the immanent God; that He is omnipresent and everlasting, it is easy to understand the enthusiasm of the poet who in an earlier and ruder time sang: "The heavens declare the glory of God;" and of that other significant and profound utterance: "Thou hast beset me behind and before." The doctrine of the Divine Immanence means that the whole universe, with its mountains, seas, stars, constellations, everything everywhere, now and forever, is pervaded by fatherhood, and fatherhood does not suggest the All which will some time absorb everything, but the absolute and infinite Person who may commune with other spirits without being limited by them.

This interpretation has its culmination on the earth in what is called the Kingdom of God. This is not all to be in the future. It is already manifest in many hearts and lives. It has always had some place among men. A few at least have always done justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly before God. In Jesus that kingdom was clearly manifested as perfect truth, perfect justice, and perfect love. Where the spirit of Christ is, there is the kingdom of God. Through the centuries it

has been silently but ceaselessly growing. Each century since the Advent, this world has been a better world; and the improvement is manifest not only in individuals but in laws, in institutions, in social usages, and even in the way that war is conducted. The most civilized nations no longer kill prisoners; they treat their enemies in their own hospitals, and care for them as if they had fallen in defense of the cause which in reality they have been opposing. In every department of affairs conduct and ideals have become more humane, and those who regard not the name of Christ unconsciously are becoming like Him, and glorying in the transformation. And this work is to go on until the kingdom of God fills the earth. The promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head was of the nature of prophecy. Crimes are committed in the name of liberty, and brotherhood often seems a farce, but when and where has it been less so? The mind of man was made for truth; the conscience of man insists on right; and the heart of man can be satisfied only with love. The kingdom of God is the sway of truth and right and love. This is a trinity concerning whose divinity there is no controversy.

When the universe is recognized as the abode of God; when the Divine immanence is realized as the prevalence of fatherhood in every part of

what we vaguely call the creation ; when we have grasped the superlative reality that fatherhood besets not only every man but everything, uses all energies and pervades all forces, and is everlasting, it is not difficult to understand that every human life and all the universe are encompassed by a purpose which in the end cannot be defeated, and which some time will achieve the perfect sovereignty of truth and right and love. Then not only the ways of God will be justified to man, but the nature of things will show that love has never been absent, and that from the hour when the morning stars first sang together, in every land and every time and forever, love has been regnant and victorious.

V

BROTHERHOOD

Is the human race a brotherhood, or have individuals in humanity no relation to one another, other than grains of sand, or the mountains of a range? With the correct answers to these questions goes the solution of all social problems. If men are related only as grains of sand or mountains, then egoism is not only justifiable, but inevitable. On the other hand if humanity is a brotherhood, altruism needs no justification ; it is the natural human condition and some time will be universal. The fundamental inquiry of theology concerns the existence and nature of God : the fundamental inquiry of sociology is, How may brotherhood be made a reality ? Theology and sociology are but the application of the scientific method to the formula into which Jesus condensed the moral law : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself."

There appears to be a revival of interest in social subjects, but the revival is only apparent. In reality the thought and inquiry of ages of investi-

gation along these lines are coming to fruition.

Interest in
Social Ques-
tions.

The human problem has always been the most pressing because it is the nearest. The Exodus under Moses was the beginning of a new nation, but still more it was a gigantic labor-revolt directed by a masterful leader. The wail of the oppressed workers was as clamorous in ancient Egypt as in modern Belgium. The Cæsars were engaged in foreign conquest, but still more in efforts to keep the pauper multitudes at home from open revolt. To-day the poor demand work that they may live : then they demanded a living without work. Nothing more conclusively answers the inquiry, Is the world growing better ? than the changed condition of the laboring classes. Formerly without organization they were satisfied with " food and the circus ; " but now they are organized and eager not only to be independent but also to improve. The labor question perplexed rulers and thinkers in the Middle Ages. Poverty which had reached the vitals of states was vainly treated with anodynes of charity by the religious orders. In the seventeenth century thought was largely absorbed with theological speculations, but from the midst of them also the ever present social agitation emerged. At first what is called the Puritan revolution was a contest as to the right of a man to think for himself, but that quickly reached

back to the prior question as to whether he is human and has any rights.

This is preëminently the age of humanity. Many causes have coöperated in making the relation of man to man the most conspicuous and imperative of all subjects of inquiry. ✓

There is interest in theology, and noble contributions to its literature have recently appeared; physical science continues her explorations and ministries, but both theology and science hold a subordinate place in the thought of the world. The one subject which, in various forms, is everywhere uppermost concerns human relations and duties. This is evident in the growth of democratic ideals, in the increasing power and prominence of the laboring classes, in the quickness with which those seeking political preferment discern that they have to deal with the many rather than the few, in the world-wide combinations of workingmen, in current literature which is largely humanitarian, in the increasing frequency and boldness of the revolts of employees, and perhaps most of all in the emphasis of teachers of religion. No preacher of this generation has had a wide influence among those who think, who has not been humanitarian in his teachings. The only possible exception is Mr. Spurgeon. Of him two things may be said. His influence was far-reaching, but

it was popular rather than permanent, and, while his emphasis was on theology, his spirit and practice were democratic. On the other hand, the prophets of the age, the teachers of the teachers, those whom the people are following, and widely quoting, have in the forefront of their creeds what once was commonly and sneeringly called "Humanitarianism."

√ The welfare of humanity has long been the chief subject of speculation and investigation. Now and then it has been obscured by wars and revolutions, but when the storms have passed, the compass has always been found pointing toward the rights of man.

√ Socialism, communism, anarchism, — the blind and frantic efforts of the masses to find truth and reality, — can be overlooked by no observing person. There is but one way in which the prevailing unrest can be alleviated, and that is by showing that there is something better than socialism, communism, anarchism. That better ideal is brotherhood. But before there will be any widespread or enduring faith in brotherhood it must be shown to be elemental and a part of the order of the universe. Socialism is a larger form of egoism ; its spirit and methods are selfish. Communism is advocated by those who wish to secure a competence without effort. Brotherhood alone is altruistic, and it alone

offers the world something better than it already possesses. But brotherhood depends on fatherhood. No fatherhood, no brotherhood; no brotherhood, no better social order. Rational optimism concerning man in his social relations always coexists with faith in "God the Father Almighty." Without Him there will be nothing more encouraging than "the survival of the fittest," and struggle and battle to the end of the chapter: with Him somehow good must be the goal of the social struggle. Since He is, not one human being will be left without sympathy and fellowship.

The importance of a rational basis for brotherhood appears when we consider the fate of a few attempts at social betterment.

Basis of
Faith in
Brother-
hood.

Experiments with democracy in the past have been dismal failures for the reason that they were in the interest of a few. What was called democracy in Greece was oligarchy incorrectly spelled. It sought the welfare of the elect at the expense of the many. The slaves were always more numerous than the citizens. Because there was no brotherhood, there was no democracy.

The French Revolutionists adopted a noble motto with enough truth in it to make it popular — "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity;" and enough error in it to insure the failure of their cause. They professed brotherhood, but the mob was more

tyrannical than the king. There was liberty only for those who could stultify themselves enough to declare that the lurid glare of Marat and Robespierre was the dawn of a fairer day. The rights of man were recognized only in theory. A few agitators, blatant and bloody in a cause which they did not understand, could not make a real democracy. Robespierre knew no more about brotherhood than Louis XIV. Danton was as great a tyrant as Richelieu.

The abolition of slavery in the United States was a war measure. It was good as far as it went, but the condition of the emancipated millions and their children has not greatly improved. The presence of the colored millions was never more perilous to the republic than now, because emancipation has not been accompanied with an appreciation of brotherhood. However much the white population may protest and however vociferous their orthodoxy on other subjects, their treatment of the colored people shows that they do not believe that God has made of one blood all the races of men, and that so far they are infidels. This statement applies no more to those who live in the Southern districts of the United States than to many who dwell at the North and in other lands. Democracies, revolutions, emancipations, are more or less failures when they are unaccompanied by

the faith that universal brotherhood is necessitated by the fatherhood of God.

No scheme for social improvement that does not have brotherhood as its final goal is worth either effort or sacrifice. It is doomed as soon as announced.

The question of brotherhood is therefore both practical and pressing. Here an interesting fact emerges.

Appreciation of man always rises or falls with the conception of God.

Appreciation of Man depends on the Conception of God.

In India, where the idea of God is pantheistic, and He is identified with the Cosmic process, a few individuals rise above their fellow men like the mountains of Thibet, but the majority of the people are crushed beneath burdens which have grown heavier with the centuries. There is little sense of humanity. There are many there who by birth are condemned to slavery, and a few favored souls who fondly imagine that they alone are emanations from the divine. Belief in a naturalistic God always results in dehumanized men.

In the old religions of Japan the Deity and the law of causation are identified. There is no intelligence, love, nor choice in their teaching concerning the Supreme Power. An endless chain of causation is all. Consequently for centuries the

social condition did not improve. Until western civilization broke the barriers of racial reserve there was vice, degradation, stagnation, retrogression, but no progress. Humanity rises where there is ground for hope in some better state. Humane feelings die when the basis of optimism is taken away. If men are only individuals in an endless succession, and if all must fall when one is touched, despair is inevitable. Where hope dies, efforts to improve the race cease. Then the evolutionary process is reversed and the individual moves far back toward the animal.

In Greece the conception of the gods was singularly anthropomorphic. They were sublimated men with bestial passions and tendencies. When the object of worship is viler than the one who worships, the moral life is degraded. (The teaching that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin was, to say the least, a rare stroke of genius.) The Greek gods were sinners, and the Greeks were sinners like their gods. Jove was an adulterer, and adultery was common among those who worshiped Jove. Venus was voluptuous, and the story of Helen was inevitable. There were controversies among the gods, and wars between the states and with outside nations. In the long run no people ever rise higher than the Being whom they worship. Is God identified with the

processes of nature? Then man will think of himself as but one of millions of manifestations of the infinite, in whom there is place neither for choice nor for responsibility. Is God the unintelligent law of causation? Then every man is what he must be, and human relations, like all relations, are determined by necessity. If there are wars among the Gods and it is impossible for one deity to respect another, men will be equally unmindful of each other. The contrast between the Ethnic and the Hebrew conceptions of God and their effect on human relations is evident and impressive. The Hebrew equally with the Hindu regarded the Deity as infinite, but he held also that He is personal and intelligent. He taught with the Buddhist that He is the First Cause and the Constant Cause, but he insisted that He has the power of choice and of imparting that power to men. The Hebrew as well as the Greek believed that God is interested in human affairs, and also that He is perfectly holy. <Such teaching led the Hebrews to put emphasis on individual responsibility and personal purity.> But even their ideal was rather that of a tribal or a national Deity than of one supreme, infinite, and universal person. Jehovah was a tribal or racial God like Zeus. Some of the prophets rose to loftier heights, but the common people believed that Jehovah was the pecu-

liar property of their nation. Their human sympathy was bounded by the nation's frontiers, and within those limits there was brotherhood but not beyond.

There was no brotherhood among the Hindus. The suggestion of the possibility is ludicrous. Between Brahman and Pariah yawns an impassable gulf. The Buddhists are charitable, but even their charity is selfish. It is the service of others in order that the ills of existence may be escaped, not that the sorrows of humanity may be relieved. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to this day are intellectual leaders, but they had no place in their system of thought for any real doctrine of brotherhood. I do not say that in those earlier times there were no adumbrations of this gracious teaching, but I do affirm that at no time was its light general, and that everywhere the conception of man and of his duties was determined by the popular ideas of the Deity.

Jesus came with a new message. The key to His doctrines is the word "life." He explained everything so far as He explained anything in terms of life. While others used the firmament with its countless splendors, impersonal laws in whose tracks all things move, night and morning, oceans, mountains, and human governments, to convey hints of God, Jesus had but one name for

Him and that was Father. He always interpreted God in the terms of fatherhood.

The social problem is very old, but since the time of Jesus it has assumed new forms.

The Exodus, and the insurrection of the The Old Problem in a New Form.

gladiators in Rome, for instance, were convulsive efforts of slaves to get relief. <The idea of a social philosophy founded on the rights of man, so far as I have learned, was unknown before the Christian era, and has been unknown since where the teachings of Jesus have had no authority.> But where His words have been read in the light of His life, the oppressed have asserted their manhood because they have learned that equally with those who seem more favored they are children of God ; that the Almighty has no favorites; that He never intended that any natural riches like air, land, water, should be the monopoly of a few. As the people have been taught that there is no "finer clay," that if any have preponderant advantage it is because of an accidental and not an inherent right, they have attempted to correct social injustice. The dearest phrase to the common people of the world is "the brotherhood of man." The majesty of the fact at last has dawned upon them like a sun. The inspiration of most socialism, and the power behind the unwearying effort to rise among those who work with their hands, is faith

in human brotherhood. Many social panaceas are still selfish because, while the people are becoming conscious of brotherhood, they have not yet, with equal clearness, discerned the reality of the Divine Fatherhood.

The contribution of Jesus toward the solution of the social problem is the light which falls from the two words fatherhood and brotherhood.

The supreme need of the present time is a correct understanding of the meaning and responsibilities of brotherhood. That can be gained only by interpreting the social problem in the light of fatherhood.

What is implied by brotherhood? Let us seek an answer in the terms of fatherhood. Fatherhood implies identity of nature between parent and child. There are difficulties here, but difficulties must not be allowed to obscure facts. Jesus teaches the universal fatherhood of God; and that necessitates the conclusion that in some way all men are of the same nature as the Deity; and that in turn compels the further conclusion that there is, and can be, no difference in the essential nature of various groups of men, and that all divisions between them other than ethical ones are artificial and ephemeral.

I fully appreciate the difficulties which at this point confront the student of human life. Much

Contents of
Brother-
hood.

of our thinking in its search after great things overlooks more important facts which lie near at hand. It may well be asked, How can you insist on the fatherhood of God when human parenthood is so often accidental and unwelcome? We call this child "our little surprise," said a somewhat free-spoken woman to one who was visiting at her home. If the history of the birth of a large proportion of the human race were written, the story could be condensed into one phrase, "a surprise." How can the accidents of humanity result in children of God in any but a Pickwickian sense? It will not do to blink this question, and yet to answer it is not easy. I content myself with recalling the teachings of Jesus. He affirmed the fatherhood of God, implying, as it does, identity of nature between parent and child. In every man equally there is something divine. But why say equally? Because it is impossible that it should be otherwise. My children must either be equally my children or not at all my children. A difference in constitution cannot make one fully a child and another partially so. The sweep of this truth is revolutionary, but it is also magnificent.

If this claim is true, all discriminations between men founded on imagined or racial differences are without a basis in reason.

Race Pre-
judice Irra-
tional.

The blackest and most uncouth African, the found-

ling of the slums who has known neither father nor mother, the bastard, the criminal, the outcast, are all, equally with the most refined and cultured, children of God ; and, unless they have forfeited them, by nature equally entitled to the rights, the privileges, and the possessions of children of God. There is something sacred in humanity. This is generally recognized now, but within a quarter of a century systems of theology began with the essential and natural worthlessness of man. Such doctrines are now giving place to emphasis on the worth and divinity of humanity. The change of emphasis is revolutionizing political economy as well as theology. But even now it is affirmed that labor is a commodity to be bought and sold like any other. This is the stronghold of selfishness. Shall I not use my money as I choose? Shall I not get for it all that it will bring? < If there is no fatherhood, then selfishness is logical ; but fatherhood carries with it identity of nature between parent and child ; and therefore every laborer is of the nature of God, and he who has the nature of God cannot in right and reason be treated like the products of factory and field. > To buy and sell labor is to make barter of a child of God. How do such prejudices look in the light of fatherhood ?

That our ecclesiasticism and our science have

made so little impression on the Chinese wall of racial exclusiveness is the most pathetic indictment of modern civilization. The Jew is still under a ban in nearly every country in Europe. With all the boasted hospitality and liberality of the United States, he is made to feel that he is still an alien.

But the ostracism of the Jew is child's play when compared with the treatment of the colored man. If the line were drawn at cleanliness, at decency, at moral character, it could easily be justified, but the line is drawn at blood. The most eloquent orator in America is a colored man ; and he is not only an orator but a practical statesman, with a vision and grasp of affairs unsurpassed by any man south of Mason and Dixon's line, and yet in few parts of the country would he be welcome at a first-class hotel, and when he returns to the State of which he is the most distinguished citizen, he is compelled to ride in a " Jim Crow car," while rowdies and prostitutes are welcomed to the best that the roads can furnish. Many of the leaders in the perpetuation of race-prejudice bear the name of Christian, and masquerade in the garments of the church. That the black man is a child of God, and a brother, is the illuminating message of Jesus, and in that light all other questions concerning him should be settled. In this respect the barbarism of the United States is as

cruel, and far less justifiable than that of Turkey or Spain.

How does the oppression of the poor look in the light of the Divine Fatherhood? At this point economic theories are of the least possible consequence. At no time during the last century has there been one hour when there has not been food and clothing sufficient for all living in civilized lands, and yet hundreds, and probably thousands, have annually died of hunger and cold, because there has been no way of getting together the man and the things which he needed.

In spite of all progress, the same conditions continue. There are factories where men work from six in the morning until seven at night, with slight intermissions, for the paltry pay of a pound a week, while those who do no work receive and spend foolishly the rewards of those who labor. Women are still paid two cents and a half apiece for making garments, when by constant toil they can earn barely enough to exist, not enough to live. Some are even told that, in ways of which it is a shame to speak, they should supplement their scanty wages.

These are illustrations of the social struggle, and they tell a fearful story. The difficulties are grievously misrepresented by many who know the truth. The laboring classes no doubt often have unwise leaders ;

The Social
Struggle
misrepresented.

and parasites suck the life-blood of many who are trying to rise, but the great multitudes know what they need, even if their ways of expression are rude. Tourgénéieff's story of Mumu is true to life. Millions conscious of love and aspiration are misunderstood, and when they plead for simple justice, they are crushed. When these facts are published, they meet the reply, "Well, what can be done? It is inevitable that some should suffer." It is inevitable that some should suffer, but not necessary that any should go hungry, or cold, or lack for opportunity of improvement, because there would be food, clothing, and labor enough for all, if no one took more than his share, and all were to act toward one another as brothers. (The most common and fatal of heresies is unwillingness to believe in the brotherhood of man.) It is easy to confess that we are "miserable sinners," but more difficult to acknowledge with sincerity that all men are equals in rights and privileges. A new article should be added to all the Christian creeds. It should read as follows: "We believe that he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen."

The teaching of Jesus is simple and clear. When He speaks of the Infinite, the Al-
mighty, He has but one word to express The Teaching of Jesus.
His meaning, and that word is Father. Whatever

else is implied in Infinite, Absolute, God, there can be nothing which may not be interpreted in terms of fatherhood. When he speaks of men, he has but one word by which to define their relations and duties to one another, and that is brother. Fatherhood interprets brotherhood. When you know parents, you know children in their rights and relations. The children are the heirs of the parents unless disinherited.

Brotherhood and fatherhood, as we have already shown, imply community of nature. All the children of God are by nature partakers of the life of God. They are called children of "wrath," or of "perdition," not to define their relations or duties, but to indicate that those relations and duties have been violated.

My duty to my neighbor is limited at every point by his divine sonship. Jesus said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" that is, Thou shalt remember that he has exactly the same nature as you have. Such a command, otherwise, would be without meaning, for no one can love a thing as he loves himself.

Love re- quires a Worthy Object.	Love for man is dependent on something in man worthy of love, and that is found in his essential divinity.
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There has been little if any philanthropy where the teachings of Jesus have been

unknown or unheeded. If men are only things, there is no strong motive for the alleviation of suffering, or the saving of life. Why die like Howard and Waring to prevent the ravages of the plague? Why deny one's self any pleasure to uplift the poor and the outcast? If men are but matter in process of change, there is no rational answer to these questions, but if all are brethren, then every motive which leads me to serve myself impels me with equal earnestness to seek the welfare of my fellow men.

If I do not respect and honor myself, I cannot respect and honor my brother. If I am convinced that when I die I shall cease to be, I shall think the same concerning my fellow man. Then I shall have lost my motive for serving others, since merely material kinship makes no demand on love or duty. A man feels no obligation toward a tree or a stone. Brotherhood is defined and interpreted by fatherhood. All duties to men are short-lived which are not founded on our common relation to God. Expedients for social amelioration will fail if they do not discern the divinity which is in all men.

The brotherhood of man is more than the dream of enthusiasts; it is the ideal which some have sought in all ages, of which their efforts to rise have been prophecies — the normal human condi-

tion which will be realized when the Kingdom of God prevails.

Struggle and battle cannot be final conditions ; they must be but means to ends, the way in which the race " mounts and meliorates " toward its " far-off divine event."

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There are three classes of thinkers on social subjects at the present time. The first Classes of Thinkers. frankly ignores idealism in dealing with human affairs. " Business is business," whether it has to do with men or things. " Ideals have their place, no doubt, but it is not in settling questions which vex society. Certain laws have been discovered, and they must hold whether we like them or not." Such thinkers ignore the nature of man and treat him as a thing. They see no difference between a free spirit and the forces of nature or the products of the soil.

The second class feels the hurts and burdens of humanity. It sees that something is wrong, and devotes itself to efforts to alleviate the evident agonies of the social disease. It ignores causes and treats symptoms. That course may succeed in medicine, but it is not a wise way to deal with social disorders. The people who suffer do not wait to learn the best way to accomplish their objects ; they simply rebel against what they feel that they can no longer endure. Their efforts end, as

spasms usually end, in weakness, if not in an increase of the disease. All such efforts are commonly though often inaccurately called socialistic.

The other school of thinkers, realizing intensely the ills from which society is suffering, seeks the cause of the trouble. It finds something which cannot be cured by anæsthetics or palliatives. The first class says men are things, and are to be treated as things, and the more you do for them the more the misery is multiplied in the end: the second asks no questions, but strongly and frantically rebels against suffering, with the result that the misery is multiplied because the rebellion was not intelligent; the third class looks deeper and finds a radical error in the way men think of themselves and their fellow men. It insists that we must study our ancestry before we can know our lineage; that we will learn that all men have equal rights when we discover that all have the same origin.

Again we say fatherhood determines the duties and relations of children. Since all men are children of God, all are brothers in the heritage of the Divine Fatherhood.

When we know what men are, and for what they were created, we may work for them intelligently. The struggling, aspiring, rebelling multitudes need to be taught that all men are brothers because all

have a common father. They will seek the best for themselves and for one another when they know themselves, and realize that one man's good should be all men's law.

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Let us now contrast the brotherhood of man as taught by Jesus with prevalent social ideals. Highest among these is Socialism. Socialism is a name covering many theories. It is enough for our purpose to define it as absorption by the state of all natural wealth, of all means of producing wealth, and of the distribution of the profits of labor. In most of its manifestations it is as selfish as unrestricted competition, because it is an effort of the many to secure more for themselves. It contains no element of love, mutual service, or sacrifice for the common welfare. It is an attempt to establish a social order which will give to those who now have little a larger share of natural wealth and of the products of labor. It proposes to do this by extending the sphere of government. But socialism would leave the heart of man as barren as before. It offers no motive beyond the hope of gain. Its ideals at the best are narrow and without relation to character. It may be called an expedient for evading the requirements of brotherhood. There will be socialists so long as there is wealth to be gained; but brotherhood will endure so long as men believe in the Divine Fatherhood.

Brotherhood
and Other
Social
Ideals.

Communism and socialism are not identical, although often classed together. The former is the more crude and impractical. It would abolish all private property. It insists that the community should own everything; that there should be a common treasury into which all wealth should go, and that each person should draw from it, not according to what he has put in, but the same as every other person. Saint Simon's beautiful rule, "From all according to ability, to all according to need," is a far nobler ideal.

Communism rests on the radical falsehood that all men are equal. All are not equal. The needs of one may be ten times more than those of another. Not all have common duties nor the same natural advantages. Communism is selfish. It is the expedient of a class. It is not large enough for humanity. It is a social state in the clouds. It might be worked in the interests of brotherhood, but is not inspired by brotherhood. It is a scheme by which those who have nothing, hope to enter without labor into partnership with those who have an abundance.

Anarchism is a blind and spasmodic protest against oppression. It is the awful falsehood by which those who know only that things are not right are deluded into thinking that two wrongs may succeed where one wrong fails. It is the denial

of brotherhood: the assertion that when one by natural gifts has risen into a conspicuous position, whatever his virtues, he can no longer lay claim to the simplest of rights and the holiest of privileges.



Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, are errors which can never long satisfy thinking men. They are foes of brotherhood, since they are designed to benefit one class. Their horizons are narrow. They have advocates because the suffering of the many is so great that they must find some escape, and these mockeries of brotherhood sing a Siren's song. They fail because they merge the individual in the mass, and because they stifle aspiration and endeavor. One plan puts the state in the place of the personal conscience; another asserts a false doctrine of equality; while the third in its agony for relief ignores God and man.

Contrast these temporary and selfish expedients with the ideal of Jesus. He taught that the whole family of man is a brotherhood. The individuality of each is sacred, and yet all are bound together by the chains of love. No one should adopt a plan or use a method for his own advancement which is hostile to the interests of any one of the others. The individual is not sacrificed but exalted. He finds his noblest privilege and power in voluntarily giving himself to the common welfare. The state is not a tyrant compelling obe-



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dience, but the community of those who serve and help one another in the unity of a common love. There is no virtue in compulsory service. He who draws out of a common treasury no more than his neighbor deserves no credit; he cannot do otherwise.  But he who voluntarily surrenders his liberty, his ease, his wealth, because his brother has need, is virtuous. 

Brotherhood is larger than the various ideals after which men have reached in the past. It is the voluntary service of the many by the individual, and of the individual by the many, because both see in all men the same nature, the same rights, the same possible destiny.


The realization of brotherhood is the superlative social ideal. It will banish all prejudices founded on caste, or color, or race. It will The Supreme Social Ideal. make the employer anxious to do by his employee as he would be done by. It will teach the poor that the rich are as human and as needy as themselves.  Sometimes the responsibilities of wealth are heavier than the burdens of poverty; but that is a hard lesson to learn. 

Where there is brotherhood, all forms of business, and all methods in business, which are hostile to the best interests of any will disappear. He who seeks to save my soul can never be willing to damn my body or mind. How can one who knows

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his neighbor to be his brother consent to rise on the ruins of that brother's home, character, or welfare? Brotherhood will quickly settle the contest between capital and labor, for among brothers no one seeks to get the better of the other, but all coöperate to secure for one another that which is just and right. Brotherhood is the culmination of the teachings of Jesus concerning the relation of man to man. It is the most magnificent and comprehensive of social ideals. \ The stone is the kingdom which, cut out of the mountain without hands, will some time fill the earth. It is the holy city which will descend out of heaven from God. It is the glory symbolized by streets of gold, gates of pearl, and the Lamb which is the Light, — for that is a prophecy of the time when even the medium of vision will be sacrificial love. >

 Certain inferences follow this teaching of Jesus concerning brotherhood, which should be carefully heeded, lest we make the mistake of putting on this truth a burden heavier than it can bear.

Inferences.

Brotherhood does imply equality in rights and in love, but not in ability or opportunity. The children in a household are equally entitled to the privileges of the home, but all are not equal in their strength either of body or of mind. In the sense in which it was used in France in the time of the

Revolution, "Equality" was a lie. There never has been any such equality. Every man has that which is best for him. One's strength of brawn may compensate for his lack of brain, but that does not make him the equal in brain power of his neighbor. Brotherhood is realized in the manifestation of love, not in domestic monotony.

"Equality" would not be a blessing. It would stifle many of the finest human traits. We grow by opportunities of service. "Equality" would banish the necessity of mutual helpfulness. And yet brothers have equal rights. Equality in rights is not identical with equality in natural endowments.

Where brotherhood prevails, all seek one another's welfare and guard one another's rights. The interests of the family are common interests. If one member suffers, all suffer; if one rejoices, all are made glad. Brotherhood implies that the race is a family. When this truth is appreciated, all that concerns the welfare of one man becomes the passion of all men. The color of the skin or the shape of the nose is a mere accident of birth, — essential manhood is not thereby affected. Brotherhood sweeps away distinctions of rank, class, race, religion, and knows only that humanity is a solidarity, and that there is no possible service of God which does not begin in the service of man.

When brotherhood prevails, weakness becomes

the common burden, and its service the common privilege. Among many animals, when one falls by the way his fellows fall upon him and kill him. Where selfish theories of ethics prevail, weakness is almost equivalent to crime. In the human struggle the frail are left to perish like worn-out horses. But brotherhood puts all its resources at the command of the weak. The child in the household is the centre of loving ministry among those who are strong. Dickens' story of Tiny Tim is a true expression of what fatherhood and brotherhood do for the weak. The poor little cripple was carried by his humble father, and all the family were made glad by being permitted to have a part in his happiness. The world is far from that ideal, but it has been uplifted.

Selfishness asks, How small wages can I pay and get the work done? Brotherhood asks, How large wages can I pay and yet keep the business in a healthy condition?

Selfishness says, It is none of my affairs where my employees live or how they live: Brotherhood cannot be satisfied if any are in an environment unfavorable either to moral or physical health.

Selfishness says, It is my business to look out for myself: Brotherhood says, It is my privilege to guard the interests and protect the welfare of my brethren. Selfishness says, It is no concern of

any one what I eat or drink : Brotherhood says, If anything I eat or drink will cause my brother to stumble, I will change my habits and give up my luxuries. Selfishness says, I will always buy in the cheapest market : Brotherhood says, I will wear no garment which has been moist with the tears or blood of the oppressed. Selfishness says, I must look out for my own interests : Brotherhood says : We will bear one another's burdens, and rise or fall together.

There is reason for gratitude that there is so much brotherhood ; that so many are actually living to minister and not to be ministered unto ; that the story of Tiny Tim and others like it waken such a deep and true response ; that there are reformers, physicians, nurses, missionaries, ministers, and a host in humble as well as in public life, who serve the weak and carry the burdens of the poor before they seek ease or luxury for themselves.

Where brotherhood prevails, laws will be made in the interests of all and not for the benefit of any one class. Divine principles are finding their way into legislative halls very slowly, but they are entering even there. Most legislation has heretofore been in the interests of those who have power, but thought for the welfare of the many is at last penetrating the minds of the average politician. Welfare, not vested interests, will be safeguarded when

the brotherhood of man is realized. I know that with many the mention of such political ideals seems to impugn the sanity of the one who offers them; but laws are only the will of the people finding expression. When the people know that they are brothers, laws will no longer be framed to defeat brotherhood. The spectacle of a corporation ignoring the welfare of a thousand people that a few more dollars may be put into the pockets of men already rich is horrible barbarism; but this may be found in every state in the civilized world. Such things are possible because some of those who have the power do not yet know themselves children of God and brothers of all men. Is the highest type of manhood seen in him who gladly sacrifices comfort and wealth in order that others may be saved to a better life? Then the state, which is only many men working together, will some time make its laws, grant its franchises, adopt its policy, so as to promote the amelioration and salvation of all. When the redemptive mission of the state is suggested, not a few say, "We do not know what it means." They are right. They do not know what it means when applied to the state because they have had no experience of its working in their own lives.

The prevalence of brotherhood will make the common welfare, the common service, and the com-

mon sacrifice for those who need, in short, the redemptive mission of the state, its most sacred prerogative. Now the state protects, then it will reform ; now it punishes, then it will seek to save.

With the triumph of brotherhood the duty of the poor to the rich will be as evident and holy as the duty of the rich to the poor. The possession of wealth is not a crime. Which is the more to be pitied, he whose hunger is seldom satisfied, or he who has food enough but never dreams that wealth has responsibilities? Starvation is a bitter fact, but not so pitiful as moral blindness. The rich need sympathy as much as the poor. Those who might know the joy of helpfulness, but whose souls are as barren of loving deeds as a desert is barren of verdure, are surely to be pitied. There was deep philosophy in the assertion of Jesus that it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom which is composed of the humble ; for it is not easy for those who have much to be humble. Brotherhood is two-sided. The poor quite as much as the rich are in danger of forgetting the duty of love. Of the forms in which love should be manifested I have nothing to say at this time. It is enough now to insist that all can add something to the common welfare and happiness. The poor need not look far to find some who are poorer. Brotherhood is the sum of social virtues.

Optimism has relations to the individual, to the state, to the universe. It is possible only as individual, state, and universe are seen to be taken up and infolded within such love as is manifested in fatherhood. Fatherhood provides a basis for optimism. All men are brothers because they have a common father. Some time they will realize that fatherhood, and then brotherhood will take possession of all human relationships and use them for the welfare of all.

Socialism would last as long as it was wisely administered: Communism would endure as long as the industrious were willing to bear the burdens of the idle: Anarchism will always be the refuge of the ignorant, the violent, and the insane. Only Brotherhood has in it the promise of the future, because it alone can reach man's common interests and relations resulting from the fatherhood of God. The aspirations of the prophetic souls in all ages have been for the perfect state. Plato called his splendid dream "The Republic;" Lord Bacon called his "The New Atlantis;" and Sir Thomas More in "Utopia" has tried to interpret the common and universal longing for social perfection.

Confucius taught that the "Golden Age" could only be found by a return to ancient ideals and to the ways and teachings of the ancestors of the race; Buddha, probably influenced by the earlier

Hinduism out of which he came, found no hope for the individual or society except in the perception that life is woe, and that Nirvana alone is peace; but Jesus taught, more sublimely and yet more simply, that the goal of humanity is the realization of brotherhood interpreted in the light of the common Fatherhood. The Ideal Republic, the New Atlantis, Utopia, the Golden Age, will take form among men when all have learned to think of the Infinite as Father, and of humanity as a brotherhood. In that new kingdom there will be but two laws. They will be these: —

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.”

“That ye love one another, even as I have loved you.”

VI

SUFFERING AND SORROW

SUFFERING, physical and mental, offers the nearest, most constant, and most perplexing of human problems, save one. It is ever present, ever insistent, and always mysterious. It has been the enigma of the ages. Philosophy quickly comes face to face with this stern fact. Literature has found in it a never-failing theme. The great tragedies, ancient and modern, have been largely studies in the realm of physical or moral pathology. The Book of Job is occupied with it: the stories of Prometheus and Tantalus, the magnificent realism of Lear and Hamlet, the sad yet victorious strains of "In Memoriam," and the subdued and melancholy sweetness of "Evangeline" are all variations on the omnipresent and bewildering reality of suffering and sorrow. Every theology quickly becomes a theodicy. When dealing with it, speculation is compelled to come down out of the clouds and try its hand at the hard facts of "human life's mystery." Pure idealism is very well for the young and prosperous who build palaces of dreams.

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When experience has done its work, those palaces are left in ruins, and the ruins themselves are cold and desolate. I should never attempt to write on this subject if I had nothing to offer except some new theory, which a too self-reliant imagination had told me would explain what the masters of literature, philosophy, and religion in all lands and times have found to be inexplicable. I shall only attempt to apply the fundamental principle of Christianity to "the common problem."

One more introductory remark is necessary. Suffering and sorrow no refinements of thought can explain away. What is symbolized by these words is ever present; and no amount of verbal jugglery can emancipate any one from what bruises the body and pierces the heart. We are dealing with facts. Using the word in the sense of things which are, the bitter experiences of men are as real as anything in the universe.

Our problem has two factors: one relates to the body and is covered by the phrase "physical suffering;" the other has relation to ^{The Problem.} the emotional nature, or the heart, and is expressed by the word "sorrow." Physical suffering pervades all orders of life. Nature "is red in tooth and claw;" and the pain increases in intensity, if not in amount, according to the perfection of being. The prevalence of suffering in the animal world

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is universal. The hurt when a little dog's leg is broken is as real as when a man receives the same injury. Pain follows men like their shadows. Man and beast alike are the children of travail. Suffering with both begins at birth. The pathos of a bird with a broken wing ; the great tears of a sad-eyed ox when cut by a stone ; the piteous moans of a tiger or panther when its foot is pierced by a thorn, are all but hints of the undertone in what may be called the minor music of creation. Moreover, the principle of murder seems to be universal.

“ Life evermore is fed by death,
In earth and sea and sky ;
And that a rose may breathe its breath
Something must die.”

A worm when stepped on squirms with pain ; a lion when wounded fills the forests with his groans. All orders of the animal world alike, if not equally, suffer, and alike exist by causing suffering. When we rise to man, the same remorseless experiences are observed. Pain begins at birth, and goes on with a never-ceasing succession of fevers, neuralgias, sciaticas, of toothache and headache, of lacerated limbs and torn nerves, until by the time they are old most men have begun to long for freedom and rest. Heaven is quite as attractive because of the hope that there will be no pain as no sin

there. How may the presence of physical suffering be explained? Is it necessary? Why is it permitted? At this door inquiry has knocked for unknown ages, but no hint of a satisfying answer has ever been received.

Equally mysterious are the phenomena of sorrow. How far down the scale of being they extend, we do not know. That they ^{Sorrow.} are found among animals there can be no doubt. But the woes of humanity are sad enough; we do not need to ask where or when they first appeared. Mrs. Browning, with her almost preternatural sensitiveness, has not exaggerated the melancholy reality:—

“ ‘There is no God,’ the foolish saith,
But none, ‘There is no sorrow,’
And nature oft, the cry of faith,
In bitter need will borrow:
Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
By wayside graves are raisèd,
And lips say, ‘God be pitiful,’
Who ne’er said, ‘God be praisèd.’ ”¹

The gamut of sorrow is full of sobs. The grief of a child’s heart, the disappointment of a lover, the anguish of a man who loses his fortune, the haunting and sometimes crazing loneliness of one who realizes that his days must be passed in sight of congenial companionship but without it, the

¹ *The Cry of the Human.*

isolation of blindness and deafness, the broken heart before the awful desolation of death, cannot be described, but they are met every day. She spoke at least a half truth who said that the history of the world could be written in tears and blood. One whose nature "attracts sorrow as mountains attract storms" must be a man of iron if he can long endure the strain. If Jesus actually penetrated to the deeps of this mystery, as Christians believe, it is not surprising that His heart broke.

What is the significance of sorrow? Why need it be? Is there not something wrong in the universe, if such awful discipline is required to perfect character? Is this simply a mystery, or is there some light in which we may see why it exists and what it means?

This problem has staggered men as long as the history of thought has been written. Buddhism and Stoicism. The Orientals have always been peculiarly sensitive to these melancholy phenomena. Buddhism, in particular, is an immense effort to escape from what appears to it to be strangling humanity, as serpents out of the deep strangled Laocoön and his sons. Buddhism has two grand divisions, Northern and Southern. One asserts that enlightenment is to be attained by the perception of "the nothingness of things;" and the other, by the perception of "misery." Southern

Buddhism is a continuous wail. Sir Edwin Arnold, in "The Light of Asia," has vividly condensed the utter despair of this faith in the phrase "And life is woe." How may I escape from misery? is the bitter cry of one class of Buddhists. The doleful conclusion is that since misery is caused by existence, the only way out of suffering is cessation of conscious being, and thus when the wheel of change has revolved long enough, they hope to realize Nirvana.

Long pondering upon this problem has often ended in atheism. It is not possible to prove the non-existence of Deity, and I doubt if many ever became atheists as a result of honest thinking. The arguments, so far as they have weight, are all on the side of theism. But when a man faces the desolations of suffering and sorrow, he is simply dazed, and before them, unless his vision is clear and his intellect singularly sane, all his arguments for optimism go down, and he leaps to the conclusion that God cannot be, or sorrow would not be. This was the road traveled by the Stoics. Their philosophy of life was much like that of the Buddhists. In substance it was as follows: Man should neither love nor long for anything; neither desire nor aspire, since all things are sure to end in disappointment. To the Stoics the supreme fact was disappointment. Their effort was directed toward

making that impossible. There is a deep truth in their writings, and they may well be studied ; but as an explanation of our most difficult problems, they are without value.

A school of modern writers are practically atheists because they are essentially pessimists. Modern Pessimists. Pessimism leads to atheism, and, conversely, atheism by quite as short a path leads to pessimism. In this class are Von Hartmann and Schopenhauer among philosophers, George Eliot and Zola among novelists, and Byron and Heine among poets. Indeed, most of the realistic school of poets and novelists, whose home is chiefly in France, but who have imitators in many lands, belong in this class. <They sing of love and death as those who believe that death ought to be the end of love ; they analyze the griefs and sorrows of men and women with a morbid fascination which seems to indicate that they live with the dead ; they have no horizon ; they see neither the splendor of the sky nor the glory of the stars, and they have no senses fine enough to catch the music of the birds or the still more jubilant gladness of the many happy human hearts>

The course of their argument, when they condescend to argue, is something as follows : Suffering and sorrow are universal. They have existed everywhere and as long as history has been written.

Either God could prevent them and would not, and therefore He is neither beneficent nor loving; or else He cannot prevent them, and therefore something is greater than God, and therefore there is no God.

This argument is plausible, and at first seems convincing. If the subject could be settled by a syllogism, little more would need to be said. But problems like this are not so easy of solution. They contain too many factors. For instance: this attempt to meet the question implies the use of reason in the individual reasoning; but reason in the individual necessitates the absolute or universal reason. If there is the absolute reason, then the universe and history are ordered and administered in harmony with reason; if the universe is thus ordered and administered, then suffering and sorrow can neither be meaningless nor final, since that would be the contradiction of reason. That cannot be possible in the universal or in the absolute which contradicts reason in man. This seems to me to dispose of the argument by syllogism, which from the presence of suffering in the universe infers that there is no God. But whether the argument is answerable or not, there is no doubt that suffering and sorrow have often led to pessimism and atheism.

I turn now to some of the attempted solutions

of this problem. Every thinker sooner or later tries his hand at this perennial puzzle. Attempted Solutions of the Problem. Plato treated the subject practically, not asking whence suffering and sorrow came, but how they should be borne. What is most required? "Good counsel, I said, which, as at a game of dice, takes the measures which reason prescribes, according to the number of the dice; and will not allow us, like children who have had a fall, to be keeping hold of the part struck and wasting time in setting up a howl, when we should be accustoming the soul forthwith to apply a remedy, raising up that which is sickly and fallen, banishing the cry of sorrow by a real cure." ¹

The teaching of the Buddhists as to the causes of sorrow and suffering has already been mentioned. They are ultimately caused by existence, but the proximate cause is some act which has been performed in a preëxistent state. The Buddhists believe that perfection and release are possible only for those who obey certain laws. Disobedience in one sphere of existence necessitates numerous rebirths in other states, and therefore the sufferings of this present time are the result of misconduct in some previous period.

¹ "The Republic," Jowett's *Dialogues of Plato*, vol. ii. p. 436.

This doctrine has been condensed as follows: "Now the doctrine of transmigration, in either the Brahmanical or the Buddhist form, is not capable of disproof; while it affords an explanation, quite complete to those who can believe it, of the apparent anomalies and wrongs in the distribution here of happiness and woe. A child, for instance, is blind; this is owing to his eye-vanity, lust of the eye, in a former birth; but he has also unusual powers of hearing; this is because he loved, in a former birth, to listen to the preaching of the Law."¹ Of course in Buddhism this teaching is modified by the fact that that faith does not recognize the soul as having essential and individual existence. Its teaching, as I understand it, is as follows: There is no spirit, no soul, no principle of personality which survives death, but the moral character of the being who dies is transferred to a new creature. Here appears the doctrine of karma, which has been defined as follows: "This is the doctrine that, as soon as a sentient being (man, animal, or angel) dies, a new being is produced in a more or less painful and material state of existence, according to the 'karma,' the desert or merit of the being who had died."² Sir Edwin Arnold has expressed the same theory, as follows: —

¹ *Buddhism*, Rhys Davids, p. 100.

² *Ibid.*, p. 101.

"This is the doctrine of the Karma. Learn!

Only when all the dross of sin is quit,
Only when life dies like a white flame spent
Death dies along with it.

"Say not 'I am,' 'I was,' or 'I shall be,'

Think not ye pass from house to house of flesh
Like travelers who remember and forget,
Ill-lodged or well-lodged. Fresh

"Issues upon the Universe that sum ,

Which is the lattermost of lives. It makes
Its habitation as the worm spins silk
And dwells therein." ¹

Another method of meeting this problem has
Christian Science. reappeared in these days. It attempts
to remove the difficulty by ignoring it.
How do you account for a thunderstorm? "There
is no storm." But it rains, the lightnings flash,
the thunder roars, and a tornado is tearing its way
through the forests. "That is a mistake." How
do you prove that? Can you not trust your senses?
The reply is simple. "God is infinite, therefore
there is no reality but God; God is love, and
therefore that which seems to be evil has no exist-
ence, because evil and infinite love cannot coexist.
A thunderstorm is evil, therefore there is no
storm." This is an accurate representation of
much current thinking. It proceeds: "What you

¹ *Light of Asia*, pp. 221, 222.

call suffering and sorrow are only dreams ; they cannot be realities, cannot have existence, since they are evils, and there can be no evil since God is infinite goodness and God is all." This is a swift and summary way of getting rid of a problem which has perplexed the profoundest thinkers of the world. If the premises are correct, the conclusions are inevitable, but the premises are not axioms ; they are assumptions, and are contradicted in a thousand ways. If there is no thunderstorm, why seek to escape from the falling torrents ? If pain has no existence, then hunger and weariness have none ; and if they have not, why eat or sleep ? It is too late in the history of the world to attempt to galvanize into life a philosophy which is effete even in India. There is a place for idealism, but pure idealism is the negation of the whole history of human thought. Science has been at work too long to make that possible. I have not mentioned this theory for the purpose of refuting it, but simply because it is one among many serious and earnest attempts to throw light on the problem of suffering. Its message is this, — neither suffering nor sorrow are realities ; both are delusions.

Calvinism has its interpretation of this world-old mystery, and it is a characteristic one. It is as follows : Suffering and sorrow are the supreme shadows of this mortal life. They can never be

evaded nor ignored. They follow from the cradle to the grave. Their only explanation is Calvinism. in the arbitrary decree of the Almighty. They are the result of man's sin. Milton's "Paradise Lost" begins in true Calvinistic fashion: —

"Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

Sin is the cause of all suffering, and the causing or permitting of sin is to be found in the arbitrary will of the Almighty Sovereign. Why do men suffer and sorrow? It is God's will; and behind that no man can go.

There is still another answer to this question, and it has been admirably stated by a venerable teacher of theology whose studies in his chosen department have given him a unique place among our thinkers.¹ His reply, in brief, is as follows: The universe owes its existence to "the absolute reason;" all the laws by which the universe, either material or spiritual, is administered are the laws which reveal the essential nature of the absolute reason. Suffering and sorrows are realities whose hurts cannot be exaggerated; but their presence should not lead to atheism and pessimism, since there must be a reason for everything which exists in the universe

The Abso-
lute Reason.

¹ Professor Samuel Harris, of Yale University.

of the absolute reason. If that reason is not evident to us, it is because of our lack of discernment. This answer differs from the Calvinistic hypothesis in that it does not rest everything on pure arbitrariness. "Men sorrow and suffer because God wills," says Calvinism. "No," replies this teacher, "but because when seen from the proper point of view, even sorrow and suffering will be found to be not only in harmony with but demanded by reason." All theories come at last to the recognition of the mystery which surrounds the whole subject. These attempts to solve this problem are worthy of serious attention.

According to the first theory, Orientals, and those Occidentals who are fascinated by their thinking, find the solution of the difficulty in the assertion of the preëxistence of the soul and its transmigration; but that is only pushing the darkness a little farther back. It does not explain the presence of suffering in former spheres of existence.

The second theory rests on the assumption that suffering and sorrow are impossible in a universe in which God is all and in all. Therefore we are all mistaken. We have imagined that we had burdens of pain and grief, but we were dreaming, and there is no load to be removed. Such credulity is alluring, but it has behind it neither faith nor reason.

Supp.

The third theory blinks no difficulty ; it faces all hard facts with serious and calm aspect, and has but one answer : Yes, they are all here ; man is born to sorrow as the sparks to fly upward ; but investigation and speculation are alike vain. Pain and grief are in the purpose of the Almighty : He has decreed them, and their meaning has never been revealed.

The fourth theory teaches that suffering and sorrow have existence in the universe by permission, if not by the ordination, of " the absolute reason ; " that, therefore, we must presume that reason underlies them ; that they are not without a purpose of blessing, and that when the clearer day dawns, they will be found to have worked for good and only for good.

Let us now inquire what light the Divine Fatherhood has to shed upon this mysterious and awful theme, the study of which is the beginning of religion and not infrequently the end of faith ?

(In themselves and by themselves suffering and sorrow are evil and only evil.) They should never be considered by themselves alone, but rather in their relation to the object which they are intended to achieve. Nature is " red in tooth and claw," and yet all pain and sorrow are evidences of something far different from a mere

The Light of
Fatherhood.

principle of murder; they show that each gradation of life serves the one which follows, and that in a certain sense there is a sacrificial tendency in the universe. This tendency may often seem imperfect, and almost without virtue, but at least it shows that what may be called the unconscious processes of nature are working in the interests of something higher than themselves. Thus Browning's verdict may be literally true, — "All 's love, yet all 's law." The things which seem severest have sides of benefit, and in the end the benefit always predominates. Fire is at once a blessing and a curse; it warms and it destroys. Poison properly used alleviates pain and saves life; improperly used it is an agent of death. So suffering and sorrow in themselves are destructive, but in the hands of Divine love they are agents of helpfulness. In the last analysis it is found that they never get out of those hands. Pain and grief are not necessarily hostile to each other. Their misuse alone proves either impotence or hate. But who shall tell where misuse begins and right use ends? Who can see through life to "the far-off interest of tears?" Few are calm enough to appreciate the way in which they are led. The voice of Job is the voice of all who find rest in the midst of the mystery. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." But even such confidence is wrong (See 1

unless it has a rational basis. To trust God without evidence of His love is neither good religion nor good ethics. It is easy enough to show that sorrow and suffering usually work toward welfare where they are not obstructed by human willfulness; but not many persons appreciate the evidence, for few have clearness of spiritual vision when their nerves are throbbing and tears falling. Those in mental or physical agony cannot find their way through an argument; they can but trust or despair.

Assuming, of course, the reasonableness of faith in the Divine Fatherhood, I will state a principle which properly used will serve as a guide in many dark places. *It is always best to believe the best.* This world is a brighter and more beautiful world, one in which even pain itself may be endurable, if behind human experience, and controlling physical forces, is everlasting and all-pervading Fatherhood. Without that the universe would be infinite mockery, and human life irony ending in death, — a fitting climax for a stupendous and everlasting absurdity. The sooner everything disappears in nothingness, the better for every one concerned. But since the universe is in the hands of a Being in whom wisdom and love are blended, some time and somehow wrongs will be righted; suffering and sorrow will be found to be harmonious with

reason, and ever to have been the friends rather than the enemies of man. *It is always best to believe the best.*

From the Divine Fatherhood certain conclusions follow with the force of demonstrations.

Suffering and sorrow are never ordered or permitted as ends. They are the servants, never the masters of men. They are allowed to exist in the same way as fire and poison. They never come unattended by opportunities of service. The force that is locked in steam carries with it the possibility of explosions. Why did not God make non-explosive steam, or electricity which would not shock? Such inquiries are idle. Explosions and shocks are evils, but electricity and steam are agents of world-wide civilization. Evil is the result of a misuse of something good in itself. Take out the power and you remove the ability to help as well as to hurt. Moreover the evil may be overruled for benefit. The explosion makes the builder and the engineer more careful; the shock teaches the electrician that he should always insulate his wires. Nothing harmful to man can be permitted as an end in itself. That truth inevitably follows the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood. < Any teaching that suggests or asserts that evil can forever endure; that it has existence in and of itself; and that it is

Suffering
and Sorrow
are never
Ends.

immortal, violates the moral sense and contradicts the Christian revelation of God. The Father cannot ordain to separate and permanent existence anything which is a curse in itself and the end of which is pain.

The converse is also true : sorrow and suffering are ordered and permitted only as a means to blessing which could not otherwise be realized. I do not affirm that the relation between the event causing the sorrow and the results of good may always be traced ; for I know only too well that that is often impossible. But I do mean that if we interpret God by His Fatherhood, we must conclude that even out of direst calamities worthy compensation in time will always appear. A hundred are killed in an accident on a railway ; a thousand are drowned by a tidal wave ; ten thousand are swallowed by an earthquake, — does not our fine optimism fail before such appalling disasters ? On the other hand, it is in the presence of such disasters that its truthfulness is most clearly manifest. If we seek for a reason for these calamities, none will be found ; but if men in accidents, in tidal waves and earthquakes, are children of God, and He is Omnipotent, then there must be some blessing within the shadow, even though as yet it is unseen ; for God can neither order nor permit anything the end of which is

Suffering
and Sorrow
Means to
Blessing.

desolation and ruin. *It is always best to believe the best.* <We¹ must think that calamities are without meaning; ²that they are evil and only evil, ordered by a malevolent being for a malevolent purpose; ³or that God hates man and is trying to make him miserable; or ⁴we must believe that they are permitted by love as a means for the realization of some beneficent purpose. The last hypothesis is rational. It reveals a prophetic significance in every pang of the groaning creation. Since the universe is administered by the Father, it follows that as winds, which might otherwise destroy, blow a ship toward her haven, so misery and agony in all orders of life will be overruled in the interests of a better time.

“Yes, no doubt; even evolution teaches that; but what about the individual? The cataclysm may leave a grander coast-line; the explosion of a warship may lead to safer construction in the future; the bubonic plague may afford rare opportunities for medical investigation; but these are poor comforts for those who are caught and overwhelmed by the ruin.” Evolution throws light on the future; it has almost the force of a new gospel when it speaks of man and the universe, but it gives no hope to those who are crushed to make that future possible. Evolution as a cosmic law prophesies civilization and the kingdom of God;

7⁴ ~~the~~ possible beliefs

The individual in evolution

but Fatherhood shows that love is beneath the infinitely small as well as the infinitely large ; that the lily as well as the constellation, the individual as well as the race, are included in a universal, immortal, and beneficent plan.

The Divine Fatherhood helps toward a rational and satisfactory understanding of our more austere experiences. Does God send suffering ? Does God send suffering and sorrow ? Surely not. Most if not all the calamities that men endure can be accounted for on other and more rational hypotheses. One is bankrupt : he entered into a foolish partnership in business, and thus brought his calamity on himself. God did not send death to that child : his parents were careless and took him where disease prevailed. That woman is broken-hearted : did God break her heart ? She married an unprincipled man ; he is now in prison ; that tells the story. But there is a child who has inherited a hideous disease. The problem now becomes more complicated. What shall we say ? The disease came by way of heredity, not directly from God. We are sick because we are human ; we are disappointed because we make mistakes ; we sorrow for those who die ; but God does not send mistakes ; men die because they are men, and death knocks impartially at the palace and the cottage gate. " But you are not relieving the difficulty." I am

not trying to do so at this time. I am only answering the imputation that God ordains what we suffer. "But if He does not send it, He permits it." Yes, but permitting is very different from ordaining. "But why is it permitted?" Even Fatherhood does not answer that question. In the darkness with thousands of other mysteries it must be left. One thing, however, is clear. This universe is ordered so that all suffering and all sorrow will work toward blessing unless the purpose is obstructed. God permits suffering, but before the trouble comes He ordains that out of it shall proceed strength and welfare for those who seek truth and right. He causes none to die in order that others may be made sympathetic; but He overrules such losses, and none are so tender and none so compassionate as those who feel the touch of vanished hands, and who hear the sound of voices that are still. He does not send ruin to our business, but when failure comes He infolds us in His arms, and, by an exquisite yet indiscernible process, teaches us that many things are richer than gold and more enduring than bank stock. Emerson long ago said: "The oyster mends his broken shell with pearl," and, "Every man has occasion to thank his faults." We add, He may thank his misfortunes also. Perfection of character is the goal of evolution. All men, as well as Jesus, are "made

*Why? a
not answer*

perfect through suffering." < Why some other method is not employed, we do not know ; but the explanation when discovered we know will be in harmony with reason and love because Fatherhood rules everywhere. > The exile Dante learned about Hell and dreamed of Paradise far from his native Florence, with a disembodied spirit for his heavenly guide. In his blindness Milton learned that "they also serve who only stand and wait." From his prison John Bunyan saw the land of Beulah and the far-away spires of the Celestial City. Tennyson was not taught to write "In Memoriam" by anything he learned at Oxford, — such music is beyond the reach of university dons. Like wine from the winepress it flowed out of his inmost soul when his heart was crushed by the death of his friend. Those who are most helpful, whose sympathy draws others as a magnet, whose "souls a holy strain repeat," are always those who have been made serene, sympathetic, victorious, by that which they have suffered. The Father sends no sorrow. We suffer because we are human ; but the Father, when He sees the cloud approaching, sows within it a seed of light, and that, if it is given opportunity, will surely grow. He does not prevent trouble, but He makes the fiercest storms the servants of the children whom He loves.

Fatherhood brings into relief another truth. No

one is condemned to suffering in order that blessings may be realized by others. Even

the most literalistic of the elder theologians taught that the sufferings of our

None compelled to suffer for the Benefit of Others.

Lord were voluntary. That innocence should be condemned to misery in order that foulness may go free ; that a pure woman should be made a scape-goat to take away the vice of a man, is a hideous imputation on the justice as well as the love of God. In a certain sense every one is free and independent. I may sacrifice for another if I will ; but to compel me to do so would rob my action of virtue. A little child dies a horrible death, and the father asks : " Do you not think God is following me ? " What idea can that man have of God ? Does any sane person believe that God sends pain, sickness, long agony, death, to an innocent little child in order that a willful and vicious man may be brought to his senses ? The idea is barbaric, yet it is not uncommon even in these days. No one is condemned to suffering for the benefit of another. The Almighty is not limited in His resources. My father would not ruin my brother to save me. If he could do so, I could no longer honor him as my father. Thus we dispose of a large class of superstitions which indicate that the belief that all suffering is penal is still widespread. Most of our griefs come by way of others. If

all sorrows were penal, it would mean that others were being punished in order that we might suffer ; that scarlet fever burns up a golden-haired child in order that a disreputable man may get his deserts ; that cholera devastates a community in order that two or three dozen reprobates may be made to understand that they cannot evade the Almighty. The hollowness of such thoughts is exposed without argument. Justice condemns them ; and justice is as real a factor in this world as fatherhood. The ultimate sources of suffering are hidden in "the deeps of God's divine ;" but those deeps contain nothing that is hostile to love. To assert that the innocent are made to suffer in order that the guilty may be adequately punished is to deny the sway not only of Fatherhood, but also of justice. The innocent do suffer — but either voluntarily, or because of the solidarity of the race ; and such suffering is always overruled for blessing.

The facts of suffering and sorrow, which largely consist of limitations, have one aspect which is altogether bright. They not only work for good in the years to come, but they make possible one of the sweetest of earthly joys ; viz., the sense of satisfaction in overcoming and achieving. The glory of being able to resist, of being delivered from despair when there

Satisfaction
in Achieve-
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Compensa-
tion.

seems no room for hope, is a pleasure worthy of great souls. To take from many the consciousness that they have faced unfortunate conditions "and laid them" would be to rob life of its crowning delight. Not many would be willing to give up the consciousness of victory won in order to get rid of the memory of sufferings endured. The problem is no nearer solution, but a compensation is here disclosed. Suffering is the condition of the consciousness of victory over the most strenuous of opposing forces. If one who is in the midst of the process were asked if the gain could balance the cost, he would reply in the negative; but if the same man were asked when the struggle had ended whether the joy of victory counterbalanced the suffering endured, he would respond in the affirmative.

Fatherhood has provided that the compensations of sorrow shall more than balance its losses.

The Divine Fatherhood makes it easier to understand the significance of space and time when applied to suffering and sorrow. Great plans require many years. These shadows reach as far as life, and seem to fill all time. Will they ever cease? This is a difficult question, and we must not be too positive with our answer. But one thing is sure, — both time and space are among the resources of Fatherhood.

Space and
Time in Re-
lation to our
Problem.

Whenever and wherever suffering and sorrow are necessary to the perfection of character they will be permitted, and wherever and whenever they cease to work toward what is best for man they will disappear. Nothing can be for the glory of God which does not promote the welfare of man. Sorrow and pain, in themselves alone, under no circumstances can be pleasing to God. Suffering is a horror in the sight of a human being. A field of blood is brutal beyond description. It must be more hateful in the loving eyes of our Father. But fatherhood does not imply weakness, neither does it allow the blinking of facts. If any can be made to hate evil only by feeling its stings, they will not be blunted because they hurt; for love dreads wrong more than pain. If this world of ours can be purified and made worthy to be called the kingdom of God only as woes are multiplied for a season, the discipline will go on. The interests of the many are of more importance than the comfort of the few. We may have to suffer because we are human, but never because we are victims on whom are laid retributions which belong to others. The cosmic order will not be changed because any man is in the path of its progress; but if one is crushed through no fault of his, some better thing will be provided.

The idea of fatherhood applied to the universe

and the race is of surpassing glory. Progress among the worlds, as among men, is by evolution, but it is evolution which is always inspired and guided by love toward the welfare of the mass and the blessedness of the individual. The universe is not a mere multiplicity and complexity of worlds in different stages of development ; in a true and glorious sense it is the Father's house, in which are many and splendid rooms. Human beings with aspiring hearts are not like grain poured by Fate into an infinite hopper where wheat and tares are ground together ; they are children of the same nature as their Father, with sovereignty over their own wills ; able to deny Him or to conform to Him. > He compels none ; He opens before all measureless opportunities of growth and of bliss, and says : In this universe suffering and sorrow must abide for a season. If it were not so, I would not permit them. As fast as men do justly and follow love, the darkness will be reduced, — but the time is not yet. If you cannot understand the reasons for my action, at least believe that your Father cannot allow any suffering longer than it is required to work blessing.

The interpretation of sorrow and suffering which was given by Christ was new in the history of thought. Formerly they had been regarded as evidence of the wrath of the gods.

The Teaching of Jesus.

The writer of the Hebrews said, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Before this, pessimism was almost a necessity because, while there may have been faith in some future good, the means by which it was to be achieved were regarded with dread. Jesus justifies the means. That cannot be altogether evil whose sole object is the production of blessing, and suffering is intended only to promote that end. This may be difficult to appreciate in the case of an individual, but not when the race is considered. \What should be the attitude of the individual toward pain and grief? \He should be careful to observe, first, that they result either directly or indirectly not from harmony with the will of God, but from violation of that will either in his own life, or in that of those with whom he is some way related. \If God has no pleasure in these things in themselves, if they are hateful to Him as to us, then in proportion as we put ourselves in harmony with the divine order, what has afflicted will disappear. \If all pain does not go, it will at least be made subordinate to the higher joys. We shall still hunger and thirst; our sight will still fail and our hair turn gray; fever and malaria may not be disarmed of their power, but our spirits will be so harmonized with the Divine that our troubles will seem not worthy to be com-

pared with the glory which is being revealed in us. The effort of the individual should be directed toward perfect harmony of will and wish with all that can be ascertained of the Divine order. The result will be the gradual disappearance from the human condition of all that causes sorrow or results in suffering. Then sorrow and sighing will flee away.

I have thus tried to apply the principle, Interpret God by his Fatherhood, to the problem of sorrow and suffering. No solution has been offered; for that we must wait for clearer light. Perhaps we could not comprehend the solution if it were before us, but this at least we know: since God is Father, and since the Father is almighty, nothing can long remain which will not in the end promote the welfare and perfection of individuals and the race. Suffering and sorrow are mysteries, but they are full of blessing for all who will do right and trust in the eternal love.

And so I conclude: When disappointment blasts hope and the future seems dark — interpret God by His Fatherhood; when sickness interrupts service and achievement — interpret God by his Fatherhood; when pain fills existence with agony — interpret God by his Fatherhood; when death invades your home and takes your nearest and

dearest — interpret God by his Fatherhood ; “in time, in eternity, in the great judgment-day,” and forever — interpret God by his Fatherhood.

“I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.”

VII

SIN

ONE problem is darker and more mysterious than that of suffering and sorrow. It is the presence of moral evil and sin in the universe. This has been an ever-recurring riddle, and one which will probably never be satisfactorily solved. When speculation and investigation have done their utmost, it still appears as if it ought to have been impossible for man to violate the harmony of which he is so conspicuous a part. About this subject we feel more than we think. But many things have a basis in reason which for the moment seem to be either the work of chance or of some malign though unseen power. We must begin our study with facts and draw our inferences from them.

Let us be careful of our definitions. Many acts in popular and even theological language are called sin which have in them no ele-^{What is Sin?}ment of responsibility and consequently none of guilt. / What is sin? It is the conscious choice of evil instead of good, or of a lesser instead of a greater good; it is the refusal on the part of

a moral agent to choose what he believes to be right. There was never a better definition of sin than that of the Apostle James: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Nothing is sin which is not the result of the conscious choice on the part of one who is free to choose differently. That is not sin which necessarily follows ignorance or compulsion. If a person is compelled to any course of action, the blame rests with the one who forces and not with the one who would prefer to act differently. Sin is willful transgression of the law; or, as it is expressed in the Revised Version, it is lawlessness; that is, living in a world of law and order as if there were neither.

The next question concerns the reality of sin.

Is Sin a
Reality?

However it may be accounted for, nothing is more universal than this glaring and appalling fact. Its record is written on every page of history; it is presumed in the sacred books of all the religions of the world; it is witnessed to by conscience and consciousness; its reality is never questioned except by those who would like to explain away things which are disagreeable and which annoy. Where or when the first attempt was made to prove the unreality of moral evil, I do not know, but so far as I have been able to learn, it was a part of the disenchantment which came to the phi-

losophers of India after the close of the first great and splendid era in Indian thought and life. The history of India, Dr. Matheson has truly called "a Pilgrim's Progress." In the childhood of that race, life and literature were surpassingly beautiful. The early writers, like those who composed the Vedic Hymns, were optimists. How that age of hope passed into one of hopelessness and despair it would be difficult to trace; but the next period shows us the Indian thinkers grappling with sin, sorrow, and suffering. India has offered the world two solutions of these problems. The first is that of the Hindu faith, which finds no way out of the labyrinth except by denying its reality. What we call sin, suffering, sorrow, are declared to have no existence. The Hindu tries to escape from them by affirming their non-existence. The perception of the nothingness of things is said to be supreme wisdom. These teachings are the burden of most of the Hindu philosophy even to the present time. But many centuries ago a protest was made against the attempt to deny the witness of universal experience. That protest resulted in a more vital and far more generally accepted religion, namely, Buddhism. The contention of the Buddhists is that sin, sorrow, suffering, are realities, but that the only way to escape from their sting is for one who suffers to seek to alleviate the suffering of others;

thus he will lose the consciousness of his own hurt. That the attempt to ignore the reality of sin had its origin as I have indicated may be uncertain, but there can be little doubt that the sources of this philosophy of negation in our time are to be found in India. In forms variously diluted it has percolated into Europe, and even found its way to America. A large and perhaps a growing number of persons, whose earnestness is beyond question, are trying to escape from an exceedingly perplexing problem by the easy path of denial. Nothing could be more futile. Whatever the genesis, or ethical quality, of what we call sin, there can be no doubt in the minds of any who do not juggle with words of its reality and universality.

It is recognized in the scientific teachings of our time. Many masters of physical science are the sternest preachers of judgment against all who do wrong. One says the power against which we are pitted in the game of life "never overlooks a mistake or makes the slightest allowance for ignorance."¹ The philosophy of evolution has as clear a recognition of sin as mediæval Calvinism, which was not a mere theory of narrow-minded dogmatists, but a true science based on a profound, if not always accurate, study of human experience. Evolution teaches that as man

The Place of
Sin in Evo-
lution.

¹ Professor Huxley, *Lay Sermons*, p. 32.

advances, he rises out of the animal condition into the consciousness that he is a spirit. In the former state, his actions were determined by his environment; but when he became a spirit, he entered into a realm of freedom. If a free man chooses to live according to the desires of the flesh, he violates the highest law of his being. That choice of sensual things by a free spirit evolution regards as worthy of blame. Theologically speaking, it is sin.

Literature may not be an infallible teacher, but it is an infallible witness concerning the common faith of humanity. The sub-
The Witness
of Litera-
ture.
 jects of the great tragedies, from the earliest to the latest times, have all revolved around the problems of suffering, sorrow, and sin. These problems were the constant study of Æschylus, Goethe, and Shakespeare. However much our pity may go out for Marguerite and Faust, there can be nothing but detestation for Mephistopheles, who is clearly Goethe's personification of the principle of evil in the world. Hamlet is Shakespeare's illustration of human limitation and suffering, while Macbeth and Lear are magnificent and realistic, yet in no wise exaggerated, delineations of sin and judgment.

Turning from literature to law we find that the legal systems of the world rest upon two facts — man's freedom, and his misuse of that freedom.

Law recognizes freedom, and penalty points toward freedom abused, which is sin. Every law
The Witness of Legal Systems. silently yet unimpeachably affirms that man is created with the power of choice, — consequently with ability to choose either the evil or the good ; and every provision for punishment and every punishment inflicted have been, and are, witnesses to the common faith that those who might have been virtuous and upright have instead chosen to do wrong.

— Conscience confirms the evidence of the other
The Testimony of Conscience. witnesses to this universal and baleful reality. The condemnations of conscience are too near and vivid to be explained away. Whatever our ethical philosophy may be, those who choose to do wrong are judged by a court which sits within their own breasts, whose decision can be neither denied nor evaded. Whether the conception of Justice in art, with her scales nicely balanced and her eyes blindfolded, is correct or not, there is no doubt that it is a true representation of conscience. Absolutely impartial, perfectly remorseless, it metes out approval to those who choose to do right and condemnation to those who choose to do wrong.

All the religions of the world recognize the sinfulness of man. Even the Hindus, whose teachers tell us that there is no sin, teach the doctrine of

Transmigration, or that the result of wrong-doing in this world is condemnation to endless cycles of suffering in lower forms of existence. A common Hindu proverb runs as follows : “A hundred good works are lost upon the wicked.” The teaching of Zoroaster is, if possible, more emphatic than that of Christianity. The problem of sin was so appalling to him that he found no solution for it except in a dualistic system of the universe which ascribes the creation of the world to two powers, one good and one bad — Ormuzd the god of light and Ahriman the god of darkness. I once asked a Buddhist priest in Japan in regard to the teaching of his religion concerning sin. He replied : “We do not believe that it has any relation to a being like the one whom you call the Deity. We think that every man makes his own destiny. If he chooses to do wrong, he weaves a web of suffering around himself, as a silkworm weaves its cocoon.” Of the Jewish and the Christian faiths there is no need to speak. The central doctrine of Christianity is that God reveals Himself in sacrifice to save his children from their sins. In some form or other all nations in all ages have believed in the reality and the universality of sin. The only possible way of escape from this fact, even in thought, is the path which has been taken by those who assert that suffering, sorrow,

Witness of
Ethnic Re-
ligions.

and sin cannot have existence in a universe which lives and moves and has its being in God. But speculation cannot long ignore science. If experiences like these could be escaped by a simple process of denial, who would not rejoice? But facts are independent of all attempts at explanation. In spite of our fine philosophies, men continue to choose things which are evil, and universally and remorselessly receive their proper condemnation. Inability to understand should never lead one to the mistake of attempting to ignore. After speculation is discouraged and exhausted, weariness and hunger continue, tears fall, age deepens its furrows, death approaches with impartial tread; and those who choose to do well are blessed, while those who choose to do evil reap what they have sown. Not quickly will the law, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," disappear from the experience of man, or from the statutes of the universe.

I now turn to some of the expedients to which thinkers have resorted in their attempts to account for sin. They are many, and indicate long and honest thought upon this most mysterious of problems.

(1) Some believe that sin on the earth is the result of violation of the moral law in a preëxistent state. This doctrine of preëxistence has had a

*captives
to inquire
sin.*

Attempts to
account for
Sin.

strange fascination, especially for Oriental people, but not for them alone. It is found in Plato; it reappears in Wordsworth, ^{The Theory of Pre-existence.} whose "Ode to Immortality" is an attempt to prove the immortality of the soul from its preëxistence. Why is there sin in this world? It has come from some other world. It is neither the penalty for previous wrong-doing, nor what may be called the baleful remnants of a struggle still incomplete. This theory simply pushes the difficulty one stage further back. How shall we account for sin in that other world from which the good, to adapt Wordsworth's figure, has come like trailing clouds of glory, and the evil like trailing clouds of gloom?

Another theory is that sin is inherited. The Calvinistic doctrine of original sin teaches that the first man sinned, and that not ^{Heredity.} only his weakness but his guilt have been transmitted from generation to generation. Not many in these times believe in transmitted guilt. We are told that what the doctrine really means is that a weakened and depraved nature is transmitted; but that was not the older Calvinism, which boldly insisted that all men sinned in Adam, and therefore that all were guilty in him. Such crude ideas probably satisfied the exigencies of the current logic, but they have been condemned by the moral

sense of most of those who in later times have studied this subject. That weakness may be inherited is all too evident; but inherited weakness is a palliation of guilt; it never adds to its condemnation.

(3)

The Result
of Ignorance.

Others think that what is called sin is merely ignorance; that with brighter light and truer knowledge all men will do right. The basis of this fine optimism is an exaggeration of the doctrine of the Divine Immanence. God is in every man, and therefore, it is concluded, no man can do evil after he knows what the right is. <But how any man can be ignorant for a single moment of what the right is and still be the abode of God presents another problem.> Much wrongdoing is, no doubt, the result of ignorance. Many are punished for what, if they had known better, they would never have dreamed of doing. In the eye of fallible human law, they must be regarded as worthy of penalty, but in the eye of the just and loving law of God, they are not sinners. Where ignorance abounds, sin does not abound. This theory of ignorance overlooks the fact that those who have had the best opportunities for knowledge, who have lived in the full light of civilization and culture, who have had every possible privilege of growth, have often been the worst sinners. It would be easy to give examples of those who have

been trained in the schools, who have been surrounded by religious influences from their youth up, who have been learned in all that science and history could teach them, who have had large and varied experience, but who have deliberately chosen to pamper their animal natures and live like beasts rather than like pure spirits. What shall be said of one who, to gratify ambition, leaves a wake of blood, broken hearts, and desolation around half the world? What shall be said of those men of the very finest literary and artistic culture in the most advanced civilization that the world has known, whose personal history is too foul to be written? Ignorance will explain and palliate much misdoing, but it does not account for the selfishness, the crime, the cruelty, the perfidy, the sensuality of those who in intelligence and education have led their fellow men, but who in vice and crime have shocked the world.

Others believe that sin is imperfect development; (4)
 that the race is not yet far enough away from the animal condition for men to be able to choose the good; that what is commonly called sin in reality is only imperfection. Result of Imperfect Development.
 This also is a charitable and highly optimistic hypothesis, and in it there is much truth. Those who do wrong from weakness are not sinners. There is no quality of guilt in their actions. He

who has no feet is not blameworthy for not walking. He who has no eyes is not guilty because he does not see. That is a hideous and awful travesty on justice which attaches to weakness the quality of guilt. What puts the ethics of materialism below the most horrible forms of mediæval theology is the fact that the former makes no allowance for weakness. In materialistic ethics ignorance and mistake are treated in the same way as intentional violations of law. The older theology preached judgment only for those who by their own choice became partners in the sin of their first parent. There is no guilt in weakness, but weakness may make it easier to commit sin. Therefore since God is good, and, as Browning puts it, "All's love and all's law," we must believe that even weakness palliates rather than increases condemnation.

(5)

Sin only a
Nightmare.

Others insist, and to this speculation we have already partially referred, that there is no such thing as sin; that the earthly life of man is only a dream; that we think we are sinning and suffering when we are only in a prolonged hallucination. This hypothesis is purely imaginary. Moreover, if sin and suffering are only like the figures seen in sleep, then everything good as well as everything bad is a dream, and civilization, progress, literature, art, the achievements of science, love, aspiration, and beneficence are also parts of

man
iles in
night-
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ers. - cooked by cavities -
all from balloon -
men on ice-berg.

one long, bewildering dream. Few thoughtful people will give much heed to such puerile speculations. They do not relieve the difficulty. If suffering and sin are dreams, then how shall we account for the fact that those who are best fitted for splendid activity and growth are condemned to threescore and ten years of hideous and uninterrupted nightmare?

Another attempt to solve this difficulty is more harmonious with reason and the moral sense. It is somewhat as follows: It was a necessity that there should be some order in the universe. The Almighty had before his mind an infinite series of systems from which He could choose. Since He is God and good, He must choose that which is best. The one which is best, because it is the one chosen, provides for the freedom of the individual. If men are free, then of course they must be able to choose, and able, therefore, to make a wrong choice as well as a right choice. The best moral system, therefore, has in it the possibility of wrong-doing. This is something very different from the necessity of wrong-doing. If there is the possibility of virtue, there must be the possibility of vice. If there is the possibility of holiness, there must also be the possibility of wickedness. The moral order of the world does not require that any should violate its harmony, but

Sin in the
Best Moral
System.

it makes it possible for all to do so. Beneath this theory is a glorious truth. < Men might grow as trees grow, without moral quality, but if they are to be developed into the life of God, they must have the freedom of God. > A creature of putty may be moulded into any conceivable form, but a man with a will must choose for himself what the plan of his life shall be. Power of choice means possible strength of character and dignity of manhood. Without that power, strength and dignity would go. This has been a favorite doctrine with many teachers. So far as an intellectual process alone can solve problems, it solves them. But the difficulty lies too deep for mere argument. With all our theories, however fine and beautiful they may be, the human heart still revolts at the presence of evil and the possibility of sin. We cannot understand why it should have been permitted. The old question continually returns: If God is good, why did He not make a world in which it would be impossible for any to violate the law of his being, and to cause agony and desolation wherever his influence may extend?

What light does the Divine Fatherhood throw upon this subject? It does not illumine all the dark places. It does not remove all the mystery. It may be called rather an aid to faith than a solution of the problem. Why any

Fatherhood
and Sin.

choose to do wrong is now, as it ever has been, a mystery. No ray of light has yet penetrated this darkness, and, apparently, we are no nearer an explanation than when bewildered inquiry first faced this subject. Those who profess to explain the universal problems may well be distrusted. There are quacks in philosophy as well as in medicine. The new thinker may have a new programme of the universe, but when he is a little older and wiser he will find that so far as it is new it is, probably, only a variation on some older thought.

The Fatherhood of God, as nothing else, shows the enormity of sin. It furnishes a background against which the true nature of guilt appears.

↳ The Divine Fatherhood necessitates the inference that goodness pervades the universe and directs all the affairs of the children of men; that the moral law is but the manifestation of a beneficent plan; that all purposes for humanity tend toward blessing; that the goal of history is love. ↳ Therefore he who chooses anything less than the best violates love. The phrase, Interpret God by His Fatherhood, implies that the same affection which a noble and devoted father has for his child, the Being who pervades the universe has for all men. Wrong-doing is a violation of that love. In order fully to appreciate this truth, we must remember that God lives in us while He also transcends us. My father

lives in me, and yet my father and I are separate beings. The vine and the branch are one, and yet the vine is not the branch and the branch is not the vine. God dwells in men. The universal love is in our common humanity. It is not something which comes, when called, from beyond the stars, but it is the very life of our life and soul of our soul. The essence of our being is love which is manifested in fatherhood. We were made for perfect love. That love can be satisfied only with conformity to the true and the right. I have the power to put myself in harmony with that which is best for myself, which is also best for all men, and which pervades the universe. If I choose to violate my essential being, I am not only injuring myself, but I am also violating that which is universal and eternal. The best for myself is the best for the universe. If the effect of a wrong choice could be borne by the individual alone, the results would be less calamitous; but we are children, and we have relation to Him from whom we come. We may live in the enjoyment of the privileges of sonship, or we may refuse those privileges. That is the prerogative of freedom. He who lives selfishly cuts himself off from the universal love.< Such misuse of power which might promote perfection and insure harmony is an appalling act of wrong.> Is this an obscure way of

putting this truth? Then let me return to a more literalistic form of expression. As our parents love us, so the infinite Father looks down upon His children with affection which can only be dimly hinted at through human relations. In them we see a little of the eternal Fatherhood. Every act of wrong is done in the sight of One who loves with true parental love, and whose heart is hurt when He sees His children throwing away their opportunities, ignoring their ancestry, and violating the dictates of their moral sense. When this fact is realized, sin is seen to be the most awful enormity. To choose deliberately that which I know is not best for me, that which makes the attainment of worthy ideals impossible, this is the folly of sin. Its results reach beyond the wrong-doer and send thrills of pain through the creation, as the shame of a child grieves and breaks the heart of his father. In the light of fatherhood, it is an awful thing to be a sinner.

Since fatherhood is at the heart of things, it follows that so fast and so far as is consistent with the moral order of the universe, so fast and so far as is consistent with the freedom of man, — which is essential to his manhood, — sin will be prevented. But this is not an easy matter. Every father would gladly shield his children from evil, but if he is wise, he

So far as possible Sin will be prevented.

will remember that strength comes from struggle. If he locks his children in the sweet seclusion of home, he will deprive them of the possibility of that growth which comes with expanding horizons, and from antagonisms and achievements in the world. Protection at the expense of possible strength is an evidence of weakness, not of love. Man might have been born into a world in which there would have been no temptation, or in which yielding to temptation might have been made impossible; but that would have deprived him of the strength which comes from resistance. Without will and ability to use it he would no longer be in the Divine image. As quickly as possible sin will be prevented. That must be, since God is good, and can do all things. But for Him to deal with a human being as if he were a thing would not be an evidence of love; for Him to treat a man who has intelligence and will as if he were an idiot would show neither wisdom nor goodness.

Interpreting God by His Fatherhood, we have
 What about the Wrong-doer? the assurance that while freedom, which is essential to those who are in the image of God, necessitates the possibility of wrong choice, all the resources of infinite and everlasting love will be at the service of those who are weak and may fall, or who have fallen, not simply to save them from the consequences of their wrong-doing,

but, by those consequences, to advance them toward loftier heights of character and achievement. This subject is treated more at length in a later chapter. It is enough now to say that no one by any act of his own can put himself beyond the reach of the Fatherhood of God. If he takes the wings of the morning and goes to the uttermost parts of the sea, he will find his Father there; if he makes his bed in the depths of the underworld, he will find that his Father is there before him with ministry and mercy. This is the distinctive and glorious teaching of the Christian revelation. <The son may leave his home, but loving hearts will follow him; he may forget his father, but his father will never forget him. Science teaches that nature never overlooks a mistake, and makes no allowance for ignorance; but fatherhood teaches that when the son comes to himself and longs for the old life and the old love, whatever deeps of degradation he may have sounded, whatever the enormity of his vice or crime, if he repents, he will find waiting for him the new robe and the kiss of love.> This faith makes optimism possible. Many who have seemed to be noble and full of promise have fallen to the blackest depths; with every opportunity of spiritual growth, they have chosen the companionship of the vilest. It is enough to break one's heart to see how the best-laid plans

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occasionally go awry. It sometimes seems as if hate rather than love must be at the heart of things. But when such thoughts are laid aside, and all purposes and discipline are interpreted in the light of fatherhood; when it is remembered that no one can ever get beyond the reach of fatherly love, our problem is still unsolved, but all is not dark. For a time one may seem to sever himself from God, but nothing can destroy the regard and ministry of his Father for him. The darkness is inexplicable, but in its midst is a pathway of light.

The fact of the Divine Fatherhood shows that, whatever may be beyond the earth, — and with that we have nothing to do at this time, — so far as we know, the consequences of sin, while they are always inexorably retributive, are also primarily for purposes of discipline and never are expressive of vengeance. “He punishes but to save.” The Scripture which says, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord,” must be interpreted in the light of fatherhood. Whatever that text may mean, it can be nothing at enmity with the essential nature of God. How He repays is not for us to understand. But we know that He cannot violate the eternal purpose of love, which is that somehow and some time all His children shall reach the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Conse-
quences of
Sin Disci-
plinary.

The fact of retribution is as evident as that of wrong-doing. Wherever there is sin there is suffering. The one lasts at least as long as the other; whether it lasts longer, we do not know. At this point we can only draw inferences. Some things, however, are perfectly clear. No true father ever allows his children to suffer for the sake of the suffering. Whatever the act, the penalty is only in order that it may not be repeated. He would be no true father who could take pleasure in causing pain for the sake of "getting even" with his child who had done wrong. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Love may be severer even than a court of justice. It will surely consider the interests of all in the household, and not simply the whim of the one who has done wrong. A guilty child will not be allowed in a home where his presence would contaminate. He will be permitted to experience the full retribution which his course may bring upon him, but that will be primarily in order that he may be taught its enormity, and made to see that holiness results in blessing, and that always and everywhere wrong-doing ends in misery. The Fatherhood of God does not in the least limit the sweep and the force of the law of retribution, but it shows that its nature is never vindictive, but always disciplinary.

“Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”

The Divine Fatherhood offers the strongest of all motives for righteousness, since acts of wrong-doing not only cause suffering to ourselves, but in some real and mysterious sense send thrills of sorrow throughout the universe. God is everywhere. We cannot escape His presence. He besets us behind and before. “The immanence of God” shows that every sin against man is a sin against God. When the Prodigal returned, he said: “I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight.” This experience developed within him a realization of the relations of his life. He had sinned against himself; but still more he had sinned against heaven and against the universe; and still more he had sinned in the sight of the one who loved him better than he loved himself. Instead of opening the gates to license, this teaching offers the strongest of all motives to righteousness because it shows that wrong-doing outrages love, and is a cause of infinite sorrow. Fatherhood reveals not only the nature of wrong-doing, but also its essential and inevitable consequences. It brings into new prominence the fact of the solidarity of the race. It shows that the act of one has an influence on all, and that all are partners in the conduct of the individual. He can

The
Strongest
Motive for
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ness.

hardly be human who shuts his eyes to truths like these.

Such considerations ought to lead those who appreciate their freedom, in which their likeness to God chiefly consists, resolutely, constantly, and confidently to resist every tendency toward evil. There is no sin until there is a wrong choice, but that wrong choice may exist in the mind without an opportunity for its manifestation in conduct. It is not the less evil. Sin is not an objective entity. It has no continued and independent being. It has its genesis every time any one chooses to do wrong rather than right, or a lesser instead of a greater good. But behind every act are various conditions and processes. Sins are never accidents. They are preceded by preparation, although that preparation may have been unconscious. There would be no temptation were there not states of mind hospitable to suggestions of guilty choices. ^{A Practical Word.} We are blameworthy not only for what we choose to do, but also for what we choose to think. > Wrong thoughts may knock at the mind, but only he who wishes need give them entrance. If, in some surreptitious way, they steal in, they can be driven out instantly by those who so desire. Responsibility for our choices rests on ourselves, not on our ancestry, our environment, or on God. The will stands sentinel at the gates of

the mind. The wise man will be as careful about what he thinks as about what he does. Opportunities for impurity have attractions only for those whose thoughts are impure. An open door suggests no criminal chances to him who has never brooded over the possibility of theft. Above all things we should guard our thoughts. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

We should never infer that, because something is wrong with ourselves, either the uni-
Conclusion. verse is out of order, or love does not rule the affairs of men. How freedom and love may be reconciled, I do not know. At times the separation between them seems like the diameter of the solar system; but they are both real, and no amount of speculation can explain them away. Fatherhood is love in action, however unconscious or rebellious the child may be; and the love of the Father will continue as long as fatherhood endures, and that is as long as God exists. The individual may violate the beneficent order in which he is placed; but love and the purpose of blessing will abide forever. The Divine plan can be defeated by our folly no more than the falling of a meteor can disarrange the movement of the stellar universe. Throughout the ages "one unceasing purpose runs."

No one was ever compelled to a sinful choice. Within every human soul dwells the power of resistance. Few sights are more sublime than the example of those who have done evil, and come into bondage, arising in their might and fighting and conquering in life's battle. Spirit is sovereign. It cannot permanently be overthrown. The love of which the universe is the expression appeals to every man to assert his rights as a son of God. How that appeal may be heeded may be learned from the response which it has received again and again, as those who apparently were morally dead have risen, broken their grave-clothes, and walked out among men with the sunlight on their faces. Lazarus was not the only person who has been raised ; nor is the Divine voice which cries " Come forth " always external. It echoes in the silence of every soul which recognizes its freedom ; and whoever will may respond. The burden of every preacher, and of every man with vision and moral earnestness, should be, " Fix your affections on things above." The power to do so is always immanent. The appeal is from that which is best in ourselves ; from the love which pervades the universe ; and it is as true now as when the words were first spoken that " Whosoever will may come."

VIII

SALVATION

THE reality and universality of sin have been considered in the previous chapter. The existence of sin carries with it the idea of blame. Weakness in itself is never blameworthy; but the conscious choice of a lesser instead of a greater good, or of wrong instead of right, possesses the quality of guilt. In many ways and in many lands men have tried to escape from moral evil, but the result has always been the same. >However its presence may be accounted for, the mystery attending it has never been broken. Its shadow rests upon literature, history, and the common conscience and consciousness of mankind. Nothing is more useless than to attempt to show either the reality or the unreality of sin. If it be proven to be a dream, the dream fills the waking as the sleeping hours. <It has haunted the human experience as long as the story of moral action has been written.> That it has the quality of guilt is the judgment which is passed upon it by the court that sits in every man's soul.

In one sense sin is something more than the choice of a lesser instead of a greater good, because evidently a fatal and uni-^{The Depraved Nature.}versal tendency toward wrong-doing is innate in humanity. It was a serious, though perhaps a pardonable, mistake to call this tendency "original sin." It is not sin, although it makes sin well-nigh inevitable. If it is imperfection, weakness, or ignorance, it is none the less perilous and pernicious. In the eye of the Heavenly Father it must be regarded in the same way as inborn tendencies toward physical disease. < In human families, those who inherit bias toward peculiar types of disease are watched and guarded with singular sympathy and care. > Among good men, the greater the weakness the more constant the consideration. Inherited bias is not disease ; and moral weakness which leads to sin is not sin ; neither does it justly carry with it any element of blame. It is, however, none the less to be dreaded. The latest investigations in the sphere of heredity confirm the conclusions of the old theology as to the reality of a depraved nature. < Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin insisted on the transmissibility of acquired characteristics. > That means that whatever comes into the nature by choice, or by the influence of environment, is transmitted to those who come after. The scientific doctrine of heredity contains

the substance of the theological doctrine of original sin. In its scientific form none even question it, however much they may revolt and rebel against the theological form in which it was stated in the Middle Ages. The theological phrase implies that weakness is blameworthy; but the scientific teaching suggests something requiring consideration. Neither the human heart nor the moral sense will, for a moment, consent to regard an inherited tendency toward evil as belonging in the same category as conscious choice of evil. The inherited tendency toward sin, or the weakened condition which is likely to lead to sin, is as evident and universal as any fact of the natural or moral world. So far all intelligent students of human nature agree. This is not the doctrine of an obsolete theology, but the result of a careful study of human nature and history. One might as well affirm that there are no nights in the year, and that there is no sorrow in the universe, as to question the existence of sin, and of that weakened nature which so pitilessly manifests itself, sooner or later, in one degree or another, in acts of wrong-doing.

These considerations lead directly to one of the distinguishing teachings of Christ, namely, His doctrine of the New Birth. Jesus said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born anew," — or born from above. The

The New
Birth.

weakened
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emphasis belongs on the word "marvel." It is no wonder. The necessity of a radical transformation in character is not dependent on any word uttered by Jesus. He spoke of what others also might have known, as well as He, and of what every intelligent person may verify for himself. If sin were only a nightmare, if none ever actually chose wrong instead of right, still His words would merit attention because even dreams have a measure of substantiality, and occasionally of suffering. Sin and the weak and imperfect condition are sad realities. The best men condemn themselves the most severely. No memory is "like the cloudless air;" no conscience is "like a sea at rest." The whitest flowers of our human life are the most conscious that they need the light from above to bring to them color and beauty.

Our next inquiry naturally is this: By what means may one who has sinned — and all have sinned — reach a state of purity and peace? The ideal is contained in the word "holiness." The child was intended to be like his Father. God is the Father, and the holiness of God should characterize all the children of God. How may such flawless character be realized? This has been an eager and a practical inquiry in all ages. Not only have elect souls groped eagerly toward a higher life, but the more obscure and humble, with equal

pathos and patience, have prayed for deliverance from the sway of sense and passion. Paul voiced the longing of many when he exclaimed: "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"¹ In all the ethnic religions consciousness of guilt is a familiar experience. Those who seek the holy life make great sacrifices, go on long pilgrimages, give of the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul, offer long-continued prayers, lacerate their flesh, and seek in every conceivable way to restore the peace of which the consciousness of their guilt has robbed them. To the student of human nature this is one of the most familiar of all experiences. It may be called superstition, or a relic of barbarism,—it matters not; the fact is that the common quest of earnest souls has been for redemption from the bondage of evil and guilt. In other words, the desire for what Christians call "the New Birth" has been ceaseless and universal. It follows not more frequently the consciousness of wrong than the consciousness of peril which comes to those who feel their weakness and the possibility of falling. How may the one who has done wrong be made to hate the malign forces which have impelled him downward, and to love and seek the right? This is an old question. But there is another equally important, How may the tendency

¹ Romans vii. 24, R. V.

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toward evil be checked and the soul made to move upward? Another question more far-reaching still is, How may the moral nature be so purified that heredity itself shall cease to transmit evil desire and become a vehicle of health and welfare alone? These are fundamental questions, and they lead directly to the teaching of Jesus concerning the birth from above. ◀ If the moral nature is transformed so that truth and right are sought and loved, it must be by some power outside of and stronger than the will which has already chosen unworthy ends. ▶ I may repent of the sinful choice which I have made; I may turn from it; I may vow never to repeat it; but if that is all, my pledge will be of little avail, since underneath my vow are the impulses of a depraved nature, while on every side temptations are making incessant appeals to that nature. The will must act, but there must be something more than the will. In some way the undercurrent must be reached. I may change that which is external; I may resolve that, though resistance kills me, I will never again yield to the wrong as I have done; but then, if that is all, the struggle of the soul may be more intense and bitter than ever, with failure at the end. Life may be simply one long and terrible battle unless some one shall sweeten the fountain of being, so that the affections as well as the will shall be fixed

on things above, so that thought shall be purified as well as choice. How may this be done? That inquiry may be evaded for a time, but it cannot permanently be silenced. It is the question of questions. It underlies all attempts at improvement both in religion and ethics. <The struggle of humanity is not simply toward a better choice, but toward such moral conditions as shall necessitate right action.> On the other hand, change of nature must be preceded by a change of choice. When the nature is changed the choice will be changed; and yet the choice will not be changed until the nature is changed. Here is an apparent difficulty, but it is one which is met by the teachings of our Lord, which declare that wherever there is repentance, which is solely the free choice of the individual, it is met by corresponding action from above. It is as if Jesus had said, If a sailor will properly set his rudder, the wind will fill his sails. The will is the rudder of the character: if it is turned in the right direction, all the winds of the heavens will favor; if it is turned in the wrong direction, they will oppose. What light does the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood shed upon this subject? It throws no light on the mystery of sin or of the weakened moral nature. Those have always been subjects of speculation. The wisest now are not one step nearer their solution than were thinkers who lived

centuries ago. Plato understood the facts as well as Herbert Spencer. Some depths have always been too deep for any man's plummet. Speculation leaves us suspended in mid-air, but Fatherhood teaches that underneath even sin and the imperfect moral nature is the everlasting love.

Whatever the mystery, love is beneath it and (all) above it and around it. Every dark problem, like every human life, is beset behind and before with God.

Another fact now comes into view. All men are and always have been equally the children of God. The universal Fatherhood of God carries with it the universal sonship of man. But all the children of God do not equally recognize their sonship. Here the analogy of the home sheds light upon our subject. In one family are four children, two boys and two girls. One boy and one girl are loving, obedient, studious, industrious, a joy to their parents and an honor to the household. The other boy and the other girl are disobedient. They grow up careless, heedless, wicked; they wander into distant lands, cause anxiety and pain, loss and shame. The latter are none the less children than the former, but they do not occupy the same relation to the parents. The home is the analogy of the universe. In all lands and worlds, those who patiently and earnestly seek

Not all Children know their Father.

to know and do the Father's will, to work with Him for the accomplishment of His purposes, realize, faintly perhaps but surely, the dignity and the glory of their sonship. But others live as if there were no God ; their words are foul, their conduct vicious, and their influence fatal. When Jesus teaches the universality of the Fatherhood, He does not mean that all the children equally recognize it, or that the Father is equally pleased with the conduct of all ; but He does mean that all are encompassed by God's love, and that all are embraced in God's plans of compassion.

Another fact comes into prominence at this point, namely, the greatness of the Father's love will always be more apparent in His dealings with the disobedient than with the obedient. On the one hand, the love goes out as a matter of course — it is expected ; on the other hand, it is a surprise. With the one class it is partly earned, with the other it is a free gift. What Jesus said about the rain falling alike on the evil and on the good is literally true, and a great mystery. Love always appears greatest where its manifestation is least deserved.

These truths are now before us. All have sinned. There is in humanity a tendency toward evil, which is sure to manifest itself in forms more or less aggravated. What Jesus called the New Birth,

Love most
Evident in
its Relation
to the
Unworthy.

or the birth from above, is the condition of a higher and better life, and the change implied in that experience is so great that there can be hope of its realization only as Divine power supplements human weakness. The doctrine of the New Birth is fundamental in religion and in ethics. All men are equally the children of God, but those who have experienced the New Birth are in relations to the Father as unlike the relations of those who are neglectful of His will, and who do not seek harmony with Him, as light is unlike darkness, or as harmony is unlike discord.

A question now arises which has occupied a large place in theological thought. What ^{What must precede the} was necessary to be done in order that New Birth. the New Birth might be realized? Do those who consciously do wrong put themselves in such a state of enmity toward God and the universe that something needs to be done in their behalf, or in their stead, in order that the transformation may be permitted? Is God so angry or so holy that He needs to be appeased before He can be forgiving? Has the conscious choice of evil broken the harmony between the children and the Father so that something more than repentance is required before the Father can consistently restore the culprit to his old place in the household? These questions in our time may not occupy as large a

place in the thought of the world as they once did, and yet no one who reads contemporary theology can fail to have observed that few subjects more persistently force themselves upon the attention of those who think than the doctrine of the Atonement, which is simply an attempt to answer the question, On what condition may the New Birth be permitted? Here I would speak with great modesty, and with full appreciation of the earnest efforts to answer this question on the part of able and reverent men who have lived in other days, or who are living now. The subject will be more easily understood if I group under a few heads some of the theories which have been held to be a sufficient solution of this problem.

One school of thinkers have held that God is absolutely just; that not only can He do nothing that is unjust, but He can permit nothing that is unjust. When a man chooses wrong instead of right, he violates infinite justice and merits condemnation. Before the New Birth can be realized, the sentiment of justice in the Deity must be satisfied. Justice can be satisfied only as every act of wrong-doing receives its appropriate penalty. Those who sin cut themselves off from God, and must remain forever cut off unless in some way they are restored. They could not restore themselves, therefore the Son of God,

Theories of
the Atonement.
The Satisfaction
Theory.

as a pure act of mercy, suffered in their stead, and His sufferings, because of His infinite nature, are equivalent to what would have been suffered by the offenders if they had been punished ; and therefore, because of the sufferings of the sinless Son of God, the New Birth is possible. God is satisfied.

This theory does not teach that Christ suffered all the punishment which others would have suffered, but that what He endured, so to speak, paid the debt, or equalized the balance, so that the holiness of God is satisfied and man may be forgiven. This was the teaching of the older Calvinism. It has behind it some of the greatest names in the history of human thought. It should not lightly be cast aside, for the theory could have found favor in the eyes of such men as honestly held it only as it had in it some element of truth. They believed that the justice of God was His supreme attribute. They adored His awful majesty. With such beliefs as they held concerning God, such a theory of what is called the Atonement was inevitable.

Another school of thinkers have reasoned somewhat as follows : This universe is under a moral government which is analogous to the kingdoms of the earth. At the head of this moral government is a king. This government is subject to law. One of its laws is that the one

The Govern-
mental
Theory.

who does wrong shall suffer an adequate penalty. Since he has broken the law which was ordained by God, he is guilty of an infinite sin, and infinite sin demands infinite punishment, which is everlasting. It is necessary, therefore, that the sinner should be everlastingly punished in order that the majesty of the law may be maintained; and all sinners would have been so punished had it not been that One stepped into the sinner's place whose sufferings, because of His exalted nature, were sufficient to uphold the majesty of the law and yet to allow the sinner to be released. This is the teaching of what is known as the New England Theology. It has been held by such men as Jonathan Edwards, President Edwards of New Haven, Professor Park of Andover, and others among whom have been some of the greatest intellects that this continent has known. They taught that above everything else the sanctity of the moral order of the universe must be maintained; that man in the exercise of his free will has chosen to break that order; that he ought to suffer, and would have suffered, everlastingly, had not God, who is bound by loyalty to Himself to maintain that order, provided a way by which it can be maintained and yet the one who has done wrong be forgiven. As the conspicuous thought in the "Satisfaction Theory" is the awful holiness and justice of God,

so the point of emphasis in the "Governmental Theory" is the sanctity of the moral order of the universe. Love requires that it shall be upheld, and not hate but love inspired the rigor with which its laws are executed. Man may be forgiven, and the New Birth realized, because the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross was a sufficient substitute for the punishment of the sinner.

These theories do not satisfy me ; I do not find them harmonious with the Scripture or the moral sense, and yet I insist that the truth which they undoubtedly contain should be recognized. They are not the idle speculations of dreamers ; they are the results of the lifelong study of consecrated men who have pondered earnestly, patiently, and sympathetically the problems of suffering and sin.

Another theory vastly more vital and harmonious with the Christian revelation repudiates the thought that anything needed to be The Moral Influence Theory. done, either to satisfy the justice of God, or to maintain the majesty of His law. The nature of God Himself makes such expedients unnecessary. The real question is, How may the one who has done wrong be induced to accept the provisions of pardon which are free to all ? The great champion of this theory in England was Frederick Denison Maurice ; in Scotland, John McLeod Campbell ; and in this country, Horace Bushnell, of Hart-

ford. They found in the suffering and death of Christ a unique manifestation of the love of God, and believed that His vicarious but voluntary sacrifice was the means which was used to persuade the unrepentant to be reconciled to the Father, who had never ceased to love them. This view seems to me far more harmonious with what is known of the character of God, than the other views which I have mentioned. It is a mournful commentary on the progress of practical Christianity that teachers of a doctrine which thus magnified the Divine love could have been looked upon by so many as enemies of the truth. But the heresy of one generation is the creed of the next, and Maurice, Campbell, and Bushnell have no lack of sympathizers and followers in these more Christian times. Their isolation has borne fruit in more satisfying views of the nature of God, and in saner interpretations of our Lord's work.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that even these modern prophets did not go far enough, and I ask — What light does the Fatherhood of God shed upon the inquiry? What needed to be done in order that the New Birth might be permitted to become a reality? If God is abstract justice, then no doubt His justice required satisfaction. If the moral order of the universe can be maintained in no other way, then its majesty must

Fatherhood
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be exhibited even in penalty and suffering. If the object of the life and death of Christ was solely to make an impression on men, then the spectacle would be made as impressive as possible. But if, on the other hand, the universe is our Father's house, and all men are equally the children of His love, whether they merit it or not, then the course will be simple and clear. In the best earthly home, when one has been for long years a shame to the household, what is required before he may be restored to the confidence which he has lost? Is not this all? He must give adequate evidence that he is a changed man. When that evidence is satisfactory, whatever the wrong may have been, the doors of the home swing wide for the return of the prodigal. He may have disgraced the family; the father and mother care not for that. They recognize that he is a new man, and he is welcome to all that they possess. His presence before was a pollution; so long as that was the case, they compelled him to remain elsewhere; but when the foulness had gone, and humility and purity had taken its place, they received him back with love and thanksgiving. In any earthly home worthy of the name there would be no exception, I am persuaded, to such treatment of an erring child. One knocks at the door who has been long absent, and whose name has not even been mentioned. He has brought upon those who

were innocent financial ruin and moral disgrace. Now he returns as a little child, and brings with him evidence that he is a new man. He says to his father: "I have sinned against the home. I am worthy of nothing at your hands. What do you require in order that once more I may be permitted to live among those who love me and be known as your child?" The father says: "My son, all that we want to know is that you are once more in harmony with the family, that you have entered into its spirit and will promote its welfare. We are sure of that now, therefore nothing more needs to be done." The welcome is instant, gracious, and insistent. The relation of the father toward the child is changed because the attitude of the child toward the father is changed. But some one may say: "Such a course would do very well in the home, where love overlooks mistakes, but it would not do in the universe, where a moral order must be maintained, and men be made to understand that none can do wrong without suffering." The reply is: "This principle would not work in an earthly government of course, because men may feign repentance and deceive the most discerning; but no one can deceive God; the Heavenly Father penetrates the inmost secrets of hearts: before His eye every dark place is opened. He may do what other rulers in their limitation and ignorance would

not be able to do. What might not be wise for a human government would be natural in the Divine government. When the father knows that the son is thoroughly repentant, he is ready to forgive. "But," some one inquires, "how can this be possible, and yet the world be taught that only holiness is acceptable to God?" I reply: This difficulty is purely speculative; it is never practical. Even with the limitations of our human life, we recognize that repentance is always a valid ground for forgiveness, and the father who would close his door to a repentant son would be regarded as a monster and not as a father. The law that "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is not violated when a child is freely pardoned, and having reaped the bitter fruit of his action, in humble contrition returns bearing with him the sheaves of his suffering. He says: "I see the folly of my ways; I hate the course that I have pursued; I beg that I may be permitted once more a small place in the home from which I merit nothing." No one is encouraged in evil courses if he is forgiven. "What then becomes of the grace of God, — which is pardon given to the undeserving?" The reply is: Pardon to the undeserving is possible in a home as well as in a government. The holiness of a father is more sublime and majestic than the holiness of a king. A father cannot allow foulness in a household be-

cause of the ruin it will work. When he sees that there is no longer ruin but blessing to be achieved, the same holiness opens the doors wide and bids the wanderer return, — and that is “free grace.”

This leads us to a truth still more fundamental and vital. It is a necessity of fatherhood that everything which is possible shall be done for the rescue of those who are in bondage to weakness and ignorance, or who, by a misuse of their freedom, have become the slaves of sin. Here again the analogy of the home will help us. What will a father do in order that his child who has gone wrong may be saved, not from the sufferings which he merits, but from the sin which is his ruin? He will weep for him bitter tears; he will follow him into many lands; he will go to him in prison; he will spend his last dollar to find him. This has been proved again and again. Almost every day we read of those who have literally died in their quest for children that have wandered from truth and virtue. It is a necessity of the parental heart to give itself in behalf of the child who may neither appreciate nor care for the sacrifice which he is causing. Interpreted by fatherhood, we rise to this majestic and magnificent truth: the Heart that beats at the centre of the universe, the Soul and Spirit of all things that are, in His relation to the humblest, the poorest, the mean-

A Necessity
of Father-
hood.

est, the vilest, is truly revealed in the passion of a father and mother to find and save their child who has disregarded their wishes and violated their love. And that is not something occasional, but it is everlasting in the nature of God. It is that which gives significance to the cross. "What relation does the cross have to the sin of man?" It is a hint of the length to which Divine love and sacrifice will go to find and to save. "What, then, is meant by the blood of Christ?" That the eternal God goes out to the undeserving in sacrifice which can be expressed only dimly by death, that there is no depth which the Divine love does not penetrate, and no space which it does not compass, that in proportion to the degradation and ruin is the ministry of Him whose "mercy endureth forever." In a distant land you find a father looking for his long-lost boy. That is what human fatherhood does for one who has wandered from an earthly home. On the cross is revealed all that we can understand of the length to which the Divine love goes in its search for those who are lost from God.

What light does the Fatherhood of God shed upon this mysterious and yet magnificent theme? It makes more apparent and ^{Conclusion.} awful the nature of sin, since it is not violation of law, but violation of love. No one feels the same

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horror of one who falsifies a tax return as of one who steals from his mother ; and yet the only difference between the acts is that the one is a sin against law and the other against love. Sin and moral weakness show the necessity of a change in nature, as well as in conduct, so radical that it can be described only as a new birth. The New Birth reaches not only to a change of choice, but even to a purification of the fountains of being. Only God is sufficient for such a task. In the "little systems" of men this subject has been hedged around with many difficulties.¹ As justice has seemed to be sovereign in the universe, some have felt that it must be satisfied before those who had done wrong could expect either help or hope. (c) Others, as they have considered the universal moral order, have believed that before there could be help or hope for a sinner, the majesty of the Divine law must be so safeguarded that no one would imagine that any sin could go unpunished ; that only in this way could those prone to evil be prevented from continuous wrong-doing.² Others have taught that the race is in need of some great exhibition of Divine love in order that it might appreciate its possibilities and seek to realize its opportunities. The light of Fatherhood reaches still farther. It shows that there is but one thing which must of necessity precede the New Birth, viz., repentance,

and that that must always do so. There must be on the part of the individual hatred of the nature that leads to wrong-doing and a resolution to fight its impulses while strength and life endure. When repentance is genuine, all the resources of omnipotent love are pledged to the weakest and the humblest of the children of men. < Fatherhood teaches that the crown and glory of all divinity, that which is eternal and essential in the nature of God and inseparable from His being, is love which will sacrifice until the lost is found. > The glory of the cross is the revelation of God in sacrifice.

What needs to be done in order that I may experience the New Birth? I must repent of my sin, and resolve, God helping me, to resist all temptations even to the bitter end. Yes, but what needs to be done that God may be willing to forgive? The answer of Fatherhood is instant, magnificent, and final. Fatherhood needs only to know that the son has truly repented. < But what about the influence of such action on others? ' That is an idle question; since those who do wrong are followed so remorselessly by the consequences of their own action that there can be no doubt on the part of any that God is satisfied only with holiness. > The culmination of the relation of man to God is perfect harmony between them. He is holy. We can become like Him only as He lifts us up to Himself.

By a necessity of His nature He is always longing to save His children. Nothing needs to be done to win Him. He is appeased already. All that any are called upon to do is to enter into the possession of what has always been theirs.

IX

PRAYER

PRAYER as it is taught in the New Testament is a very simple subject, but as commonly presented it causes much perplexity and anxiety. Properly understood, it is as natural as speech; but wrongly interpreted, the difficulties are many and cannot lightly be set aside. I approach this subject in the conviction that most of the confusion concerning it has resulted from a failure to give proper place and emphasis to the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood. The analogies of law courts were impressive in Roman times, but in these days they are exceedingly misleading. Law has a new meaning. Science has lifted the idea of government to cosmic proportions. The political order has given place to the physical and moral order. Formerly, divine action was interpreted in the light of human institutions, but now human institutions are interpreted in the light of divine revelations. Every subject has to be approached in a way peculiar to the environment in which it is studied. New times necessitate new terms and new methods. Certain

presuppositions are essential to any proper consideration of this subject. They have been mentioned in previous chapters, but not improperly may be referred to again.

God is the ultimate or absolute reality, and He is a person. The word "person" when applied to the Deity means exactly the same as when applied to humanity.

Identity of
Nature be-
tween Man
and God.

He is revealed in humanity. He is spirit, and spirit of necessity unites in one self-consciousness the power to know, the power to feel, and the power to choose. What man is within limitations God is without limitations. Man is spirit and, therefore, a person. Personality signifies the same in man as in God. The difference between man and God is one of "distance," not of nature. A stone can hold no communication with a man because between them there is a difference of nature. A child, however, may have intercourse with a philosopher or a king, for while the distance between them is great, there is a kinship of nature. But identity of nature does not mean destruction of individuality. If man is as truly personal as God, and God is the infinite Person, communion is not only possible but inevitable. It is necessary, however, to repeat that in communion individuality is not lost. A sunbeam cannot hold intercourse with the splendor of which it is a part, nor a leaf have

conscious fellowship with the stuff of the universe. An emanation is one thing ; an individual person is another thing. The former may be re-absorbed into that from which it came, but the latter cannot be.

Since God is a person who is imaged in humanity, and since man is a person who reflects God, intercourse between them, as I have said, is both natural and inevitable.

Since God and man are both free, that intercourse may take whatever form either one may choose. God may speak to man — Revelation
versus
Prayer. that is called revelation ; man may speak to God — that usually takes the form of prayer. But it need not be petition in the common understanding of that word. It may be adoration, praise, thanksgiving, conversation between the child and the parent.

Belief in the reality of such communications has been found in all nations and religions. It has taken many forms, but has ever been a conspicuous and universal fact. Sacrifice has its origin in prayer, and every form of worship is evidence of a belief on the part of the worshiper in the possibility of communing with the Deity whom he worships. The offering may consist of fruit, of animals, or even of human beings ; or it may be the more spiritual adoration of the fire-worshippers,

who see in the glory of the dawn and the brightness of the sun and stars objects which awe them into silence and draw from their souls exclamations of praise. Whether the worshiper be a priest with an uplifted knife ready to slay the victim upon the altar, or another priest with a garland of flowers and a sheaf of grain, or a peasant prostrate before the rising sun, the act means the same thing, for all equally recognize the possibility and reality of intercourse between the human individual and the Almighty. The history of religion is the history of faith in the possibility and reality of some kind of communication between God and man. The more primitive faiths represent the Deity as manifesting Himself in ways that strike terror, speaking in the thunder, and flashing indignation in the lightning. The supplications of men with such a faith are apt to be cringing and cruel. Like God like man, is a truth which has the force of an axiom. As belief in a holy and loving Father becomes more general, worship grows spiritual and more widely satisfying.

In these principles which are truisms we have a foundation for a consideration of the subject of prayer. Prayer is a part of the intercourse between man and God. God approaches man in revelation, man approaches God in prayer.

What, now, is the Christian doctrine of prayer?

It differs from that of other religions only in being more spiritual, and in being so presented as to commend itself to the reason and the moral sense. Jesus deals with this

The Christian Teaching about Prayer.

subject in two ways: by example, and by direct teaching. It must not be forgotten that almost the only word for God which He used was Father.

(This exercise, which with the masters of other religions was the abject humiliation of a subject before an infinite and awful sovereign, with Jesus was the glad and grateful approach of a child to his parent.) Prayer in the Ethnic faiths is intercourse between man and the monarch whom he fears and worships; prayer with Jesus is the intercourse between a child and his Father. This distinction is clear and fundamental. In the one conception are found all the difficulties which have been associated with this subject and which still attend it; while the latter offers a reasonable and satisfying solution of a perplexing problem.

At the beginning of His public ministry, before He undertook any great work, Jesus went apart and spent a whole night in prayer to God. What took place during those hours of silence is not revealed. It was not necessary that it should be. The Son in communion with His Father is the world's noblest and most illuminating example of the reality of prayer. Before

The Example of Jesus.

He selected those who were to be His most intimate and constant fellow-workers, He withdrew into companionship with God, in whose strength His task was to be achieved. Beyond that we may not penetrate. Those who follow His example in their own way will learn more of the mystery of prayer than will ever be taught them by human teachers.

On the night before His crucifixion the pure soul of Jesus audibly breathed aspiration and petition. The Intercessory Prayer in behalf of His disciples is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to John. It shows the Son in communion with the Father; now talking to Him in a simple and direct way of blessings desired, and again with impassioned entreaty asking for the unity of His followers and the sure glory of His kingdom.

In Gethsemane he besought God, saying: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Here the prayer has two parts, petition and resignation. Some of the words of Jesus on the cross are also examples of prayer. "Father, forgive them." Thus He directly sought a blessing for those who were injuring Him. At the last He said: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." In this utterance again we find petition and resignation.

Turning from the example to the teaching of Jesus we come, first, to the Lord's Prayer — the most significant of all His words The Teaching of Jesus. on this subject. This is an example of true prayer. A part of it is recognition of God; another part the expression of desire for spiritual blessings; a single request concerns physical needs; while still another part is the voice of reverent satisfaction in the Divine will.

Into the teaching of the apostle I will not enter, since it is only an echo of what is found in the Gospels. All the teachings of Jesus on this subject are clear and easily understood. With Him prayer was the intercourse of parent and child. The more common word, "conversation," covers the meaning, although at first it seems far too small. The prayers of Jesus were His conversations with His Father, and the Lord's Prayer is an illustration of how a man may converse with God. When a communication begins with the word "Father," the ideas of awe, fear, distance, which characterize those who prostrate themselves before the invisible powers, disappear, and a clear note of confidence and personal affection is introduced.

All masters of religion recognize the possibility of intercourse between man and Deity. The doctrine of Jesus differs from that of other teachers in that while they represent God as a king who

must be appeased, a being who can be satisfied only with sacrifices, He represents Him as the almighty and all loving Father. With them, prayer contains an element of terror ; with Him, it is pervaded with confidence and affection. With them, the attitude is one of prostration ; with Him, it is the expectancy of trust.

But here we are met with the objection that answer to prayer involves a violation of the
Objections. uniformity of nature. This objection has been raised so often and by such eminent authorities that it has had an influence which it does not merit. What is the uniformity of nature ? The physical order which has thus far been observed by the science of man. But only a small fraction of nature has yet been explored. When Professor Huxley wrote his famous treatise on Prayer, neither the phonograph nor the X-rays had been heard of, or dreamed of. In the professor's own field of biology, immense strides have been taken and vast explorations have been made since he laid down his task. The uniformity of nature is a great and true phrase, but sometimes it is made to carry burdens which are too heavy for it. It means that there is uniformity so far as observation has gone, and that from what has been we may properly infer what will be. There is an immense assumption in the phrase, "the uniformity of nature," as it is com-

monly used, but we may pass that by. The uniformity of nature does not and cannot mean that there is no coöperation between various laws ; that there is no higher sphere than the physical ; and that new forces and new laws may not yet be discovered. Again, uniformity applies to physical things. The mind and the affections belong to free beings. We are the inhabitants of two worlds. In the lower there is uniformity ; in the higher there is freedom. Prayer is an illustration of the interaction between these worlds. There is constant communication and coöperation between them. If poison is administered in sufficient quantities, a physical law determines that it will surely kill ; but an intelligent and free being may administer an antidote to that poison by which the life of the sufferer may be saved. Poison never would apply its own antidote. To affirm that it would, would be to assert a break in the uniformity of nature, but to hold that mind and will may administer saving remedies is not to believe in any fracture of the law of causation. In accordance with a law of nature, iron in water will sink ; left to itself it always does so ; there never has been known an exception. And yet mind may so fashion it as to make it float, and it may build it into ships which will fly like the wind over the waters, carrying whole cities at a time. This is no violation of the

uniformity of nature, but an illustration of a higher sphere acting upon the lower. The wheels of a factory roll on remorselessly. Left to themselves, with the power behind them, they will continue their motion; but a boy can divert the power, and in an instant the whole place will be as silent as the grave. The change has been wrought by the action of a law of mind upon a law of matter. If we recognize the possibility of the coöperation between the two spheres, our difficulty vanishes. Nature is uniform, but in no respect more than in this, that it always responds to the influence of mind. The will of man can change the current of a river, can divert the lightning in mid-heaven, can stop bodies which left to themselves would continue to fall. The law of inertia says that a body shall always remain in the place where it is unless moved upon by an outside body; but mind can at any time determine when that motion from the outside shall be applied. The objection ignores one of the commonest facts in our mortal life, namely, that the sphere of mind is above that of matter and has dominion over it. The uniformity of the world of matter is unquestioned; the freedom of the realm of mind is equally beyond question. If a child could ask his father to shut off the power by which ten thousand spindles are kept in motion and the request could be granted without any break in the

established order of that factory, another child may ask a greater Father for some similar blessing, and the granting of the request would be no violation of the uniformity of nature. This objection rests upon an unfounded assumption, and upon a failure to observe a class of facts which are among the commonest in human experience. Familiar things are often the least studied. Their nearness prevents their having the influence which belongs to them. Coöperation between the higher and lower worlds is as common as any phenomenon which has ever been observed, and that coöperation is a conclusive answer to the objection that prayer is a violation of the order of the universe.

What light does the Fatherhood of God throw upon the subject of prayer? It illuminates all its darkness. It shows Fatherhood and Prayer. that prayer is not the effort of a man to get the better of the universe, or to induce Him who has ordered things aright to change them in response to the whim of one who does not know what is best. It is not continual pleading for things which are grudgingly granted because of perpetual teasing. It is something far nobler and more satisfying. Prayer is intercourse between the child and the Father of his spirit. If God is truly represented by that word Father, then there is no time and no place in which He may not be approached by His

children ; and His eagerness to listen will be in proportion to the greatness of their need. We must keep close to our principle, that to understand what Fatherhood means in God we have only to multiply by infinity what it means in man. If the truest human father is anxious to be helpful to the child who longs for him, who can measure the eagerness of the Divine Father to respond to the appeal of the child whose need is always before Him? Human parents are often swayed by their feelings ; they are fallible ; they do not always understand their children ; they are limited by physical conditions ; they become nervous and petulant. Not so the perfect Father. Every human being is a child of God ; therefore all may be sure that they will find hospitality when they turn to the Father who is in heaven.

Where may we pray? Wherever our Father is. Where is He? He pervades the universe. He transcends it as the spirit of a man transcends his body ; and yet He is nigh to us, even in our hearts. No cathedral shrine, no sanctuary of marble, can imprison Him. He is in the solitude of the desert, in the fore-castle of a ship, on the sick-bed, where all that the sufferer can do is to close the eyes and commune with the God who is nearer than hands and feet. His presence will be realized wherever there is an open mind and a reverent spirit.

Fatherhood shows that prayer on the part of the child is often and properly petition, and that it is just as frequently and just as properly without petition. Common usage has limited the word "prayer" to asking for something. That is the result of the inability of the mind to see more than one side of a thing at a time.

Because when men prayed they asked for favors, it was presumed that that was all there was in prayer ; but at other times they have rendered praise and held silent and devout communion. The phrase, "the practice of the presence of God," is one of the best definitions of prayer, but it also includes petition.

In every home the child goes to his father for the things which he desires, and in proportion as he realizes that his father is noble and good, it will be impossible for him to ask from him anything that is unworthy. One who had always been the soul of honor, who despised duplicity, would never be approached by his child with a request for something, to give which would require dishonesty.

If we ask anything according to His will, we are told that He will grant it, and His will is but the expression of His nature. Anything which would require injustice is not in accordance with His will. But we are limited at the best, and our knowledge of what is right and true often fails.

What then? Fatherhood teaches that the ear of God is always open to our requests, and that we are to go to Him for the things which we think will be best, and He will do for us what is actually best. The answer will sometimes be a granting and sometimes a denial of the request. A son desires to make an investment of money. The father refuses. The next day the boy learns that if he had been allowed to do as he wished, he would have lost all. The father has answered his prayer with something better than he was asked to give. A girl begs her mother to be permitted to play in a certain house. The mother declines. She is broken-hearted at the refusal, but later learns that within those walls one is dying of a contagious disease, and knows that her mother has been better to her than she asked. We answer the prayers of those nearest and dearest to us by giving to them that which we think to be best; God answers the petitions of His children by giving that which He knows to be best. When there is a realization of the Fatherhood of God, prayer will be unforced and natural, and there will be no doubt concerning the answer, because the purpose of the Father to promote the welfare of His children is at the heart of the idea of Fatherhood.

But why, then, should we pray? If God knows, what need of our asking? Keep to the analogy of

the home, and this difficulty will go with the others. Fathers, when they know what their children want, do not always anticipate their wishes; they often wait for the request to be proffered. Intercourse between parent and child brings them nearer to each other. God does not require to be informed concerning our desires, but we need the privilege of telling Him. “But the things which I most earnestly seek are denied me. How can I believe in prayer?” A return question will answer that inquiry. Do we not often find it necessary to decline to accede to the wishes of those whom we love simply because we love them — and when we know that it is impossible for them to understand our motives? We seek their good. They must trust and wait. “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter,” is as true in the relation of parent and child, in every home, as of the relation of human children to the Father of all.

What, then, should be the relation of the child to his Father? One of perfect freedom; but also that of one always seeking to know, and to be in harmony with his Father’s will. When the child seeks the same things as his Father, there is harmony between them. We are free to ask whatever we desire, but in proportion as we appreciate that we are not children of atoms but children of God,

conformity to His purpose will be our constant aspiration and knowledge of His will our endless study.

For what may we ask? This question has already been answered in another form.

For what
Pray. We are not wise. We can see but a little way beyond our wishes and ambitions. We are led upward and onward by slow and painful steps. Naturally we think that that is best which we most desire. Is there no possibility of true prayer for those who are earnest but mistaken? If God is our Father, we may go to Him with whatever request is in our hearts, and freely ask for whatever we believe He would think best. "Ah! but what if He refuses?" There is only one reply to that question, and happy the person who has learned to accept it as final. God's refusals are always beneficent answers. Few men have lived long without being quite as grateful for the things which the Father has denied as for what He has granted them. That which seems essential to happiness or welfare to-day, to-morrow we may find would have been our ruin. That for which the heart seems breaking to-day, if it were possessed would break the heart to-morrow. Few would be willing to be Providence for themselves. It is better to trust to chance or fate than to try to dictate or determine what shall befall us. Fatherhood teaches

that there is no chance or fate ; that the desire of not one earnest heart is ever lost ; and that a response from infinite Love is always given to every request. God's refusals are always lasting benedictions.

But is conformity to the Divine will possible on the earth ? May those who are weak, fallible, unworthy, hope ever to reach the state in which they may be sure that they ask according to that will ? If pressed to an answer I should say : It is possible for human beings to reach that condition because Jesus reached it, and He was the typical man. But if the question is pushed farther, and I am asked, Have you ever known any person who had reached that altitude ? I should have to answer, I have not. " The fullness of the stature of Christ " is far above and beyond those who have yielded to sin, or who feel the impulses of an evil heredity. Not one of the disciples attained that sinless state. The greatest of them said : " This one thing I do, I press toward the mark." The examples of the saints in all ages show that the common experience is one of struggle, darkness, conflict, doubt, and progress by slow and painful growth. Conformity to the will of God is a high and splendid ideal. It will be realized some time, since our Father would never set before any an impossible task. Whatever He asks must be within the bounds of possi-

bility. Dante could not have been altogether wrong when he placed the state of the "perfected will" on the heights of the heavenly life. For that all are bidden to aspire, remembering that the quest is not hopeless; that they do not, like those who sought the Holy Grail, "follow wandering fires, lost in the quagmire;" but they seek something which has been realized by one man, and is some time to be the gracious inheritance of all men.

To conclude, then. Since man is of the nature of God, and since God is manifested in humanity and man is the image of God, intercourse between them is natural and inevitable. That intercourse is what is called prayer. As the will of the child becomes conformed to the will of the Father, he seeks only those things which are in harmony with the Father's purposes, and realizes that his prayers are answered even when the specific thing asked for is withheld. But most men walk in the dark; know not what is best; are swayed by impulses; insist that they must have what they most want. All these are taught both by the discipline of apparent refusal and by the realization of greater benefit, that the purpose of the Father is always one of blessing; that no prayer ever fails of a response, and that He is often kindest and most loving when He denies that which is most eagerly sought.

X

PUNISHMENT OR DISCIPLINE

THE question as to the meaning and the duration of the suffering which follows wrong-doing has been a subject of inquiry from the earliest times. It has been an occasion of the deepest anxiety, and sometimes of dark and troubled thoughts. In the earlier years of this century, in many parts of the world, there was a reaction from current and severe forms of theological teaching which seriously threatened the usefulness of the Church.

In the last analysis, the majority of intelligent people trust their instincts, or rather "their hearts," when dealing with the most perplexing problems, and in the end, they are usually justified. The ultimate question, when such subjects are approached, is not what is written, even in the Bible, or what is taught in any school, however sacred, but rather what writing or teaching coincides with the voice of the heart, when it speaks its inmost convictions.

Few positions in religious thought are abandoned because they are proved to be false, but many have

been left behind because, in moments of illumination, men have seen that they could not be true. To some this method of reasoning may seem like trifling with momentous realities, but it is not trifling, — it is the method which common people, untrained in systematic investigation, must always adopt ; and, after all, it is the best way. No one who is true to himself ever goes wrong. The heart has as many rights in this world as the head. The elemental truths, those which have most to do with life, are not made more authoritative by prolonged intellectual processes. They are simply discerned. Sight is ultimate. Opinions concerning the results of wrong-doing, even among those who most truly represent the churches, are not the same that they were a few years ago. The change is not the result of more thorough study of the Bible, but rather the yielding to feelings which before had been held in silence. After all labored expositions of Scripture, after all analogies drawn from nature, after all the deductions of logic, the heart, “like a man in wrath,” rises and says, “I have felt,” and with most that is the final and convincing word. The “everlasting Yea” is spoken by the heart. By the heart of course is meant the whole man asserting himself after seeing rather than speculating.

The popular doctrine of punishment for sin has

gone down before the intuitions of those who have simply felt that it could not be true. A conservative theological professor, riding on an omnibus in London, looked into a public house and saw the place crowded with women as well as men, women with babies in their arms, women giving the little ones drink from their glasses. He looked and pondered, and finally said, "It is such sights as these that undermine all our theories about future punishment." Did he ever again teach the doctrine as he had taught it before? I know not. Soon afterward he entered into the brighter light. But his remark reveals the process by which the change in the interpretation of this doctrine has come about.

In England and Scotland the severer forms of this teaching have almost disappeared; not because of more thorough study of Scripture, but because the awful congestion of population, with its attendant miseries, has convinced the majority of Christian thinkers that the old interpretations were too small for the near and terrible facts of human life.

The subject is difficult for many reasons, chief among which, perhaps, is the dogmatic spirit in which it has so often been ap-^{Difficulties in the Way.} proached on both sides. It has been presented as a truth concerning which there could not be two opinions. Those whose hearts have cried out in

anguish against statements which they could not believe have been treated as if they were hardly worthy of Christian recognition. The result has been that thousands have long disbelieved what they have been taught and simply concealed their unbelief. On the other hand, the advocates of what is called Universal Salvation, in an imperious and equally dogmatic spirit, have refused to see that honest and able men could never hold such doctrines unless there were in them some elements of truth. They have been equally omniscient and denunciatory on the other side. Such methods of treating any subject result in controversy and acrimony, in the assertion and recrimination which always conceal truth and sever those who should be united in its quest.

Behind such themes, in the nature of things, always lies a background of mystery. The limitations of revelation are often misunderstood. It does not bring positive knowledge concerning all subjects; it offers only so much light concerning any subject as men need to live by. Systems of theology are necessary for all who think. They are the means by which individuals classify their thoughts, but the system of one should never be regarded as essential to accurate thinking by another. We must try to harmonize knowledge, but at last we find that all of truth which the wisest

have had is a series of glimpses. Not infrequently it has been found impossible to harmonize those indistinct yet individually trustworthy glimpses of great truths. God's dealings with men, like His method in the universe, quickly lead into darkness. We try to project our sight into that darkness, and fail. It is foolish to seek a basis for positive statements concerning what limited beings never can know. Everlasting and infinite are only like x in the algebraic equation. Assertions as to what they stand for are exhibitions of ignorance or egotism.

This subject lies within a sphere of which wide and sure knowledge is impossible, but glimpses are possible, and from the little which is seen, it is proper to form opinions concerning what is unseen. It should be remembered, however, that opinions never have the value, or obligation, of truth which is beyond reasonable debate. When these facts are considered, this subject will be approached with more wisdom and less recrimination. It can be settled by reference to no passage of Scripture, and to the authority of no council and of no Church Fathers.

There is not now, and there never has been, unanimity of opinion on the subject of the nature, the duration, and the results of wrong-
Differences
of Opinion
 doing. Earnest and noble thinkers have acknow-

ledged the Dantean horror of the views which they have preached, and reverently and honestly said, in spite of the protest of their hearts, that they have accepted such views and bowed to them simply because they believed them to be the clear teaching of revelation. Others have taken counsel of their hearts alone, and sometimes have omitted to study with equal care the facts of nature and life.

In earlier days in the Church, this discussion resolved itself into a question of the etymology of words in the English translation of the Scriptures alone. The common faith of mediæval times, probably with substantial accuracy, was conveyed by the artists. Their horrible caricatures of God and man, when man in full view of the Almighty was represented as burning in quenchless fire, are familiar to all who have visited the Italian galleries and cemeteries. They were not essentially different from the pictures of Puritan preachers of the school of Jonathan Edwards, and of Roman Catholic preachers in this country also.

Without attempting a historical review of the broadening of ideas on this subject, it is enough to say that during the last twenty-five years the change from severer to more humane interpretations has been evident and swift. It has been due to many causes. I will mention four.

Causes of
Changes of
Opinion on
this Subject.

First among these is the greater freedom which has been exercised in the expression of convictions. The larger liberty of utterance has exerted its influence on the thinking of the masses of the people.

The second cause has been the interpretation which distinguished scholars have given to the word translated "eternal." It is now quite generally regarded as having no relation to time, but only to the state following death. Then eternal punishment does not necessarily mean punishment without end, but punishment in the state which succeeds death. If eternal does not of necessity mean everlasting, then it may end ; and then what is called punishment may be something other and better than has been supposed.

Another and more potent cause of the change in sentiment which we are considering is the influence of the doctrine of the immanence of God. If God in a certain real sense is in every man, then He cannot everlastingly hate Himself, even in the poor manifestation of Himself in a human creature.

But perhaps the most powerful of all the forces which have worked in the direction of what is called the "larger hope" has been the influence of the poets. Robert Burns, with his homely but convincing songs, moulded the theology of the common people more than any theologian of Scotland, not excepting Calvin.

But the three great poets of the larger hope were Browning, Tennyson, and Whittier. When estimated by their influence on the thought of English-speaking people, they must be recognized as the preëminent preachers of this century. They voiced the deepest convictions of the clearest and best minds of their time. They will not be understood if they are regarded as mere artists in words. They are far more. They studied the Christian revelation long and reverently, and then opened wide the doors of their souls for the spirit of God to show them the true interpretation of what had been written and what was being lived.

Browning's faith has been confessed in his poem "Apparent Failure," and in "The Ring and the Book." From the first I quote as follows:—

"It's wiser being good than bad;
 It's safer being meek than fierce:
 It's fitter being sane than mad.
 My own hope is, a sun will pierce
 The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
 That, after Last, returns the First,
 Though a wide compass round be fetched;
 That what began best, can't end worst,
 Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."

From "The Ring and the Book" I quote:—

"Else I avert my face, nor follow him
 Into that sad, obscure, sequestered state
 Where God unmakes but to remake, the soul—
 He else made first in vain: which must not be."

The faith of Tennyson was confessed in words with which the world is more familiar : —

“ O yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ;

“ That nothing walks with aimless feet ;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete.”

Whittier was equally clear and positive, without being dogmatic. His “ Eternal Goodness ” has been more widely read and had a greater influence than any sermon ever preached and, I think I may without extravagance say, than any “ Confession of Faith ” ever composed in America. His faith was clearly indicated in the stanza : —

“ The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above :
I know not of His hate, — I know
His goodness and His love.”

I have thus tried to trace the process by which current views concerning this subject have been changed from what they were fifty years ago to what they are to-day. That there is anything like uniformity of opinion on this subject, even in so-called “ orthodox ” circles, no one would imagine who is well informed and without prejudice.

Where the Scriptures are not so clear and positive as to make variety of opinion disloyalty to them, it is the right and duty of all who believe in the sanctity of revelation to seek for themselves such conclusions as will best convince the reason and satisfy the heart.

Is there any common element in the theories by which attempts have been made to explain the fact that suffering follows wrong-doing? No reasonable man will deny that sin is always and everywhere, sooner or later, followed by suffering on the part of the one who commits the sin. As this fact has been studied, have the conclusions had any points in common? They have. That common element is the belief that such suffering is retributive; that it grows by a necessity, in the nature of things, from the wrong which has been done. Thus far all students of the Scriptures and of human life agree. There are differences of opinion as to the duration of the consequences of wrong-doing, some holding that they are brief, some that they continue until they have accomplished their object, and others that they never end, but nearly all believe that misery grows out of sin, as a plant from its seed.

The etymology of retribution suggests the idea that wrong-doing reacts on the one who chooses

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to do wrong. Retribution is an evil deed reacting and so causing misery. Primarily it has a vital rather than a judicial significance.

A few persons, and they are very few, interpret what is called punishment as something arbitrarily inflicted by the Almighty, and without any vital connection with the wrong that is done. The number of persons who hold this view is so small that it hardly requires more than mention at this time. Retribution is the natural and inevitable fruitage of wrong-doing. It is the idea which was in the mind of James when he said that "sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death."¹ The misery which always grows out of thinking and doing wrong is retributive. That is a process in the natural order.

What is penal suffering designed to accomplish? Is it to manifest the holiness of God? Is it to express the sanctity of the moral law? Is it simply a natural consequence? Does it manifest the Divine Fatherhood? Or does it combine some or all of these objects? These questions are vital in theology; and a rational answer to them is essential to the mental peace of every thinking man. In the end the inquiry comes to be: Is there any basis for Optimism, when the awful mysteries which surround such suffering are considered?

What is
Penal Suffer-
ing intended
to accom-
plish?

¹ James i. 15.

These are the questions which mothers, as they rock their cradles, ask with far more intensity than philosophers and theologians ; and may we not add that this is a department of inquiry in which a mother's intuition is more trustworthy than any purely intellectual process, either of interpretation or speculation ?

Does the suffering which follows wrong-doing, as a shadow follows a figure, manifest the holiness of God and His hatred of sin ? If we have correct views as to what end that suffering is intended to accomplish, then the reply is " Yes," but the subject has often been so presented as to obscure rather than to exhibit the holiness of the Deity. Does it express horror of sin ? Surely. But horror can never be an end in itself. The exhibition of Divine horror at wrong-doing is not a worthy explanation of penal suffering. What shall be said of the sufferings which follow mistakes ? Of those which are purely matters of heredity, and for which the agent is not responsible ? A " child of the Ghetto," who chose neither father nor mother, nor place of birth, nor being born at all, yielding to the tendencies within him, violates an eternal and universal principle of right. But he never heard of any such principle. What results ? Suffering, perhaps as intense and long continued as if he had acted in the light. Is that suffering a manifesta-

tion of Divine horror against sin? Whose sin? That of the one who did the wrong, or of the being who allowed such a creature to be born? If the common idea of punishment is imported into such suffering, and it is insisted that the man is being punished for doing what he did not know to be wrong, neither Divine horror nor Divine justice appear, but something strangely like a travesty of righteousness.

If there is no other solution of this problem, it will never be solved, for there is no special need of the manifestation of Divine horror for its own sake; and if it is manifested for any end outside itself, it must be for the welfare of man, and thus it becomes remedial rather than punitive.

“But it is the punishment which wickedness merits.” That it merits condemnation is beyond doubt, but that such condemnation should be manifest in long-continued wrath, unmixed with thoughts of benefit, is a cruel blasphemy. I will go as far as any one in insisting on the guilt of willful wrong-doing, but the hypothesis that the sorrow and pain of the universe are chiefly merited punishment is without justification. Because sin should be condemned, it does not follow that the sinner should suffer without hope, but it does follow that he should be saved.

I now venture a proposition which it is easy to

verify. The idea of punishment is essentially barbaric, and foreign to all that is known of the Deity. If I am met at once with the reply that it is a Biblical idea, the answer is, A scriptural word it surely is, but a scriptural idea it is not. The signification of the word in the Bible must be learned from its use in the Bible. Therefore I say the idea is not scriptural, since there, as will be seen later, it suggests chastisement with a view to reformation.

If the history of government has demonstrated anything, it is the failure of punishment as a means of preventing crime. It is a serious question how far it is a protection against evil-doers. That it does thus protect is the only ground on which it can be justified. In those states where punishment is severest and swiftest, crime is suppressed, but not eradicated. Murder is nearly if not quite as frequent where the death penalty is rigorously executed as where it is unknown. Prisons become schools of crime from which criminals graduate in regular succession. The statistics of the average prison show that most of those who are discharged are soon back again. But how is it where the prison goes and the reformatory takes its place? The moral instructor in the Reformatory at Concord, Mass., informed me that 80 per cent. of those committed to that institution graduate from

the criminal class into the ranks of good citizens, while of those committed to the prisons about the same proportion become habitual criminals.

That punishment is a failure and reformation a possibility is the lesson of the contrast between prisons and reformatories. But it may be said that the state should express its detestation of crime. Why should it do so? For its own sake? That would accomplish no good purpose. For the sake of the culprit? It would not benefit him simply to see an exhibition of vengeance.

Punishment is contrary to the true idea of the family. In the household all the members are mutually helpful. The strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and do not seek to please themselves. A father who, because his child was a wrong-doer, should endeavor only to satisfy justice would win neither sympathy nor respect. In family life, suffering may often have to be inflicted, but never in order that the parent may manifest his wrath or justice, but always that the one doing wrong may be reclaimed and the innocent protected. What has been proven to be a failure in the administration of human affairs, and to be foreign to the divine ideal of domestic life, can with difficulty be supposed to hold an important place in the government of God.

The word "punishment" is common in the Eng-

lish translation of the Bible, but its meaning must always be interpreted in the light of what Punishment in the New Testament. is revealed of God. A mere question of etymology should never be allowed to outweigh the whole Christian revelation concerning the character of the Almighty. When the word "punishment" is used in the New Testament, it is always something administered by the Father, and therefore of necessity, not for its own sake, but in the interests of love, since God is love. If a perfect human father would not inflict suffering on his child to show his wrath against the wrong-doer, or to show his own goodness, although he would do it to promote the welfare of the family or of any individual member of it, surely the Heavenly Father cannot be supposed to multiply misery for the purpose of satisfying Himself or manifesting His holiness, although He would prevent it, or even ordain it, if that were the only or the best means of achieving a beneficent result. Paul represents God as saying, "Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord."¹ How shall that be interpreted? It must be interpreted in the light of the Christian revelation of God, who was manifest in Christ to save men. What that passage means is this: Fallible men, sinners themselves, should not presume to inflict punishment on

¹ Romans xii. 19.

their fellow men, because they cannot know all the circumstances which have led to their action. Only God knows those circumstances, and He "will recompense" or adjust according to His wisdom.

The same method of interpretation is required in the reading of such a passage as the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. The wicked go into "eternal punishment." What does the word "punishment" mean there? What it always does in such circumstances. Three questions may be asked: Which is more harmonious with what is known of God, to think that the word implies the going away to endure vengeance which has no end but its own satisfaction? or the putting of those who have sinned where their evil will hurt no one but themselves? or the permission of suffering for the sake of bringing the culprits to themselves, as is always the case in a worthy earthly home?

If punishment as the expression of anger or abstract justice is a failure in the state, and is never found in an ideal family, and if it is contradictory of all that is known of the character of God as revealed in Christ, then what end is penal suffering ordained to accomplish? We cannot think that a fact so stupendous and universal as the inevitable connection between sin and misery is without significance, and without justification in the Divine order. Why is the fact of retribution so deeply embedded in the nature of things?

Penal Suffer-
ing inter-
preted by
Fatherhood. I will endeavor to answer this question in the light of fatherhood. Divine Fatherhood is nothing else than perfect love. Human fatherhood is an inadequate but true expression of the same love. That which is simply inadequate never contradicts that of which it is a perfect expression. A ray of light is an inadequate revelation of the sun ; it is true as far as it goes, and only fails because it is not large enough. What the universal splendor is to one ray of light, that the Divine Fatherhood is to human fatherhood. The love is the same, — in one case it is finite, and in the other infinite. What would violate love in man would violate it in God. Why does a parent allow, or even compel, his child to suffer when he does wrong? There are only two answers to this inquiry, and they are parts of one: in order that the child may be brought to a better mind ; and in order that the household may be protected from baleful influence and example. Anything else would be barbarism. Often the sight of the suffering hurts the parent more than the child, but he allows it, not for his own satisfaction surely, but in order that his child may learn to hate evil, and be brought to realize that in righteousness alone is welfare and happiness. The end of suffering, so far as it is caused or permitted in the family, is the welfare of the child and the family.

In other words, in the home what is called punishment is always discipline ; that is, it seeks to save the one who does wrong. When we rise from the single point in the circle to the great arc, from man to God, we face a question which has troubled and puzzled thoughtful souls in all ages : What is the meaning of the suffering which results from individual wrong-doing ? Hindus and Buddhists can only say that the man who suffers has existed and sinned in a previous state. His miseries are not only the result of what he does here, but of what he was and did in a preëxistent life. The mediæval answer was an echo of the earlier paganism, which represented the deities as subject to passions, and quick to resent insults. Human beings were punished, and punishment was the infliction of Divine wrath. The offended Deity took pleasure in the consciousness that the creature who had dared to disobey received his deserts. This teaching has not entirely disappeared. It was vividly portrayed by the art of the Middle Ages, and found its most awful literary interpretation in Dante's "Inferno."

But in these later days there has been a real return to Christ ; not such a return as delights in saying beautiful things about Him and paying compliments to His divinity, — which are like the hanging of tawdry ornaments on the crucifix, —

but such a return as is realized in the attempt to think of God, man, and the universe, of time and eternity, as Jesus thought of them. With Jesus, the Sovereign was always the Father and the Father the Sovereign. Fatherhood was the only interpretation of God or the universe which our Master used.

Let us now apply His method to the problem in hand. Would God the Father permit pain simply to show His power? That is incredible. Would He allow millions to suffer simply because He was angry, however much, from a human point of view, that anger may have been merited? That is incredible. Would He not both permit and use suffering, if by that means the welfare and the happiness of individuals and of the race could be promoted? The analogy of human fatherhood answers that question in the affirmative. We conclude that what is commonly called punishment for sin is never in this world, or in any other, punishment in the human sense, but always such chastisement as is found in every true human home. Punishment as an expression of wrath, or enmity with no remedial purpose beyond, is a relic of barbarism. It carries with it the content of vengeance. It is the expression of anger, of passion, or at best of cold justice. I am aware that this use of the word will be challenged, but the challenge can

easily be met. It may be affirmed that penal suffering is the Divine holiness expressing its hatred of sin. That is undoubtedly true, but if it stops with such expression, it is not holiness but selfishness. If, on the other hand, that expression of holiness is used or permitted in order that the sinner may be made to hate his sin, then it is no more punishment but chastisement.

The law of retribution is universal, and it must be everlasting. Wherever men do wrong, they will suffer, and that suffering is not a sign of wrath but of love, since it tends toward the realization on the part of man of his duty as a child of God.

On any other hypothesis, what is known as penal suffering has no justification except the arbitrary will of the Almighty, and such an hypothesis is an impeachment both of His justice and His love. But if penal sufferings are disciplinary, the most perplexing of mysteries becomes a manifestation of infinite and deathless affection. To deny that penal suffering is always and solely for purposes of salvation is to deny the love of God; to assert positively that any will be able to defeat His redemptive purpose is to affirm that God's power is limited. But these are subjects which must be considered by themselves. At present I am dealing only with the former.

As I survey human life and interpret the events

in the history of individuals and the race in the
Optimism
Possible. light of the Divine Fatherhood, I see
still long ages of darkness, strife, blood-
shed, and woes unutterable. I see wars end-
ing in the disappearance of whole nations, and
sorrows around the heads of men and women as
thick and black as thunderheads around an Alpine
crest; but I am not disheartened nor discour-
aged, for I am sure that no man ever lived who
was not infinitely precious in the Father's sight,
and if any suffer, it is only that the purposes of
the Father may be accomplished. When awful
horrors sweep over nations, again I am not de-
spondent, for those horrors, which sometimes seem
the coronation of cruelty, are permitted that na-
tions as well as individuals may be taught that in
righteousness alone is abiding prosperity. The
year is an analogy of the life of man on the earth.
The cold of winter, the rains of spring, the heat
and storms of summer, the chill of autumn, are
essential to the glory of the year. Even so pain
and heart-ache, tears and blood, remorse and de-
spair, which always follow courses of wrong, are
means by which imperfect and often animal tend-
encies are eliminated, and the spirit of man is
brought into the freedom and strength of a child
of God.

If one thinks of the Deity as an austere mon-

arch, having a care for His own honor but none for those to whom He has given being, optimism is impossible. For what shall we say as we think of our loved ones who have committed sins? That splendid boy who yielded to an inherited tendency — what has become of him? Those millions who with little light and mighty passions have gone wrong — what of them? Those countless myriads who peopled the earth in ages past and had no clear motive to righteousness, since their perception of God was dim, — is this all that can be said of them; in torment they are exhibiting the glorious holiness of the Almighty in His hatred of sin? Some may believe that, but, thank God, the number is not large. Rather, if we may for a moment speak of God in anthropomorphic terms, let us think that His heart is burdened almost to the breaking as He says, “How earnestly have I longed that these my children might be made fit for joy without a stroke of sorrow or pain, but they would not! I must now leave them to the consequences of their own actions; they must suffer terribly, but I have so ordered the universe that the tendency of suffering will be remedial. By pain their eyes will be opened to see the true wisdom; by disappointment they will be taught to desire things which have permanent value; by their own breaking hearts they will learn how my heart yearns

over them. Thus, what they would not voluntarily learn, they will some time understand, and then they will even praise the hand that disciplined." With such an outlook, optimism is possible. What we call punishment is only the discipline by which the Father is seeking to bring all men to the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Thus the bleary eye and the tipsy stagger of a drunkard ; the lassitude of a debauchee ; the sense of isolation in the heart of one who is dishonest ; the despair of those who have violated virtue ; the remorse which, like snakes on the Medusa head, bites into misery those who have betrayed truth or honor, however much they may pain us as we behold them, are signs of the deep remedial force in the nature of things, which has always been at work and always will be, and which, unless counteracted, will result some time in universal and immortal harmony.

But this subject is so important and yet so confused that we must now take up other closely related questions which are not essential, but which, in popular thought, are inextricably bound up with our study. Our conclusions rest on the assumption, which few would doubt, that retribution is a natural law, that it is universal in its sweep, and that it is a manifestation of the beneficence which pervades the

Other
Closely
Related
Questions.

universe. This law must continue its operation as long as one free agent violates the moral order. Nothing that has been said should be allowed to obscure that fact. Neither justice nor love would be honored, if one soul were allowed to escape the action of this law. My sole contention has been that the sting in retribution is ordained to be remedial and restorative rather than punitive and vengeful.

“Retribution will continue as long as sin endures.” Is that all? Does not observation show that suffering lasts longer than sin? It does beyond any question. Some of the consequences of evil conduct seem to be unaffected by repentance. Forgiveness will not restore a hand that has been cut off, and it will not compensate for years of neglected spiritual growth. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” but they may have a smaller spiritual capacity. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin,” but it does not in an instant place the penitent *roué* beside the pure in heart who have enjoyed the vision of God for half a century. Consequences of wrong-doing outlive the sinful act. If nature and history alone were studied, the conclusion would be that penal suffering is out of all proportion to the unrighteous act. The eye that is put out can never be restored. The hand

How Long
will Retri-
bution con-
tinue ?

that is cut off will never grow again. The mind that is uncultured in youth well-nigh loses the capability of culture. If a man commits a crime, the memory of it follows him to the grave; if a woman sins against virtue, she is regarded as soiled, to the end of the chapter. "Nature never overlooks a mistake," and makes no allowance for ignorance. The error of much of our theological teaching is found at this point. It supposes that there is an analogy rather than a contrast between the way of nature and human government, and the way of the household which is the method of grace. In nature, a wrong once done is done forever; in the household, penal suffering lasts only as long as the sin. In the moral order, there are certain consequences which do not cease when the choice of evil is changed, but these consequences always tend toward the completion of the work which began when the first twinges of conscience were felt. In other words, they are redemptive and not punitive in their character.

Thus far the question of the duration of penal suffering has been only incidentally considered. The controversial spirit in which the subject has usually been treated has tended to obscure what is far more important than the time-factor in the problem, viz., the fact of retribution itself. Some have gone so far as to declare that a

The Duration of Penal Suffering.

belief in the endlessness of misery following sin is essential to the Christian character. A distinguished New England preacher is reported recently to have made this astounding assertion. Then belief, not in the Gospel, but in what some imagine will follow its rejection, is the distinguishing characteristic of Christianity. It will be long before many intelligent Christians will give assent to such teaching. The motive of such assertions is to impress evil-doers with the enormity of their courses. It has exactly the opposite effect. It hardens some and disgusts others. It leads to doubt of the justice and love of God. It diverts attention from the fact of retribution. Great harm is done when those who belong together separate on points which are not essential to the common cause. Endless and fruitless discussion about the duration of punishment has convinced no one, and has turned many away from the Church altogether. If emphasis had been placed on the fact that all who do wrong will suffer in proportion to the wrong which they have done, a momentous fact would receive adequate recognition. If in addition the other fact, that love must sometimes be austere and use severe measures in order to achieve a redemptive purpose, had received worthy and careful expression, there would have been no revolt from the Church, because its doctrine on this sub-

ject would receive daily illustration in the discipline of the home.

But the question presses for an answer. Can God be permanently defeated? Will the end of all things be a divided universe with the devil supreme in one part and God in the other? After all these Christian centuries, must we get back to what is substantially Persian Dualism? If God cannot be defeated, then must we not believe that His redemptive agencies will at length be victorious, and every child of God come to himself and return to His Father? Apparently that is the only possible conclusion, but here we are met by the mysterious fact of freedom. Every man is a free agent. He who is free cannot be compelled, even by the Almighty, without first suffering the destruction of his freedom. It is impossible to think that a man should ever lose the power of choice, for then he would cease to be virtuous; and it is impossible to think that God can be defeated, for that would be to cease to believe in God, since a God who could be defeated would be no God. John Milton has a noble passage which may well be quoted here: —

“ O Father, gracious was that word which closed
Thy sovereign sentence, that man should find grace,
For which both heaven and earth shall high extol
Thy praises, with the innumerable sound
Of hymns and sacred songs, wherewith thy throne

Encompass'd shall resound thee ever blest :
For should man finally be lost, should man,
Thy creature late so loved, thy youngest son,
Fall circumvented thus by fraud, though join'd
With his own folly ? that be from thee far,
That far be from thee, Father, who art judge
Of all things made, and judgest only right.
Or shall the adversary thus obtain
His end, and frustrate thine ? shall he fulfill
His malice, and thy goodness bring to naught ;
Or proud return, though to his heavier doom,
Yet with revenge accomplish'd, and to Hell
Draw after him the whole race of mankind,
By him corrupted ? or wilt thou thyself
Abolish thy creation, and unmake,
For him, what for thy glory thou hast made ?
So should thy goodness and thy greatness both
Be questioned and blasphemed without defense."

But I am reminded that there is another possibility. The end may be the spiritual death of the sinner. The wages of sin may be literal spiritual death. God may be victorious, but in the destruction rather than in the renewal of those who have been wrong. In the universe none may long oppose Him, for the reason that the seeds of evil have come to their fruitage in death. This is too large a subject to be discussed in this place. On this point it must suffice to say that that hypothesis is contrary to the whole spirit of this chapter. On that theory, there is no place for discipline. If that doctrine is true, then penal suffering is arbi-

trarily administered by God, who in His own time and way blots out of existence all who sin, — which violates the Christian revelation of the nature of God ; or penal suffering is only the consequence of wrong-doing, and has no end in itself, — which is contrary to what we have found to be the teaching of revelation and reason concerning what is called punishment. Many analogies seem to favor this theory, but they are not sufficient to justify so momentous a conclusion. Many buds fall and die ; much fruit never ripens ; there is no principle of restoration in a seed of death, but facts equally significant are found on the other side. With this mention I leave the hypothesis of the death of the soul, only adding that I am aware that it has not received the attention which many think it deserves.

This is a question around which there has been, even within two decades, a great and needless controversy. Happily that has ended, and it is possible to consider dispassionately a subject about which certainty is impossible. Will there be an opportunity after death for any to repent ? So far as this is a question of Scripture, the answer must be that it is not explicit on this point. Every man will reach such conclusions as best satisfy his moral sense, and best harmonize all the facts in the case. No interpre-

Is Repent-
ance Possi-
ble after
Death ?

tation, however, can be justified which violates what is known of the moral character of God. "Will any repent beyond the grave?" As a matter of fact, no one knows. As a matter of speculation, the answer must be: If they continue free agents and consequently to have the power of choosing right or wrong, they may choose the right, and to do that is to repent. If any cease to be free, they cease to be virtuous and consequently cannot be fit for heaven, for a heaven of compulsory goodness would be no heaven at all. Those who have died in the faith have natural ability to choose evil, and those who have died in their sins have the same kind of ability to forsake evil and to cleave to the good. This is not a question of revelation. It is simply one of probability. When we weigh probabilities, we are forced to such inquiries as the following: Is it probable that the accident of death, which may be caused by a mistake in medicine, by a snake's bite, by a falling tile, by an infinitesimal microbe, by slipping on the ice, should determine the condition of an immortal spirit? Is it probable that those who have been creatures of an evil heredity; who have come into the world loaded with evil bias; who were born with passions like fire; who have had those passions stimulated by pernicious environment, and have seldom felt the inspirations

of finer ideals, simply by dying should be placed where henceforward no influence for good can possibly affect them? Is it probable that those who have been born in barbarism, and whose days have been passed in darkness; who have had little light and almost no motives toward purity; who have even supposed that vice was virtue, and who have been taught that the gods could be pleased with such self-sacrifice as the immolation of all that is noble and pure, would never, never, never, even if their eyes should be opened, be permitted to choose the right which they might love if it were revealed to them? Every person must answer these questions for himself. I think that the most of the world would be found to answer them in the same way, if inmost convictions could once escape from the false feeling that any creed is ever binding which violates that which the heart in its moments of most intense hunger feels to be true.

It is not reasonable to give to death such tremendous powers. On the hypothesis that death determines all, it becomes mightier than God. It raises an impassable barrier before the cross of Christ and says, Thus far shalt thou come and no farther; to freedom it says, You may hold sway while men are in the flesh, but you shall not when they escape from the body; to all motives of love and aspiration it says, Into my realm you shall

never come with your hope and your light. I cannot believe that death to such an extent is the arbiter of the destinies of the race. It is an awful fact. It shuts from our view much that we would know. It is presumptuous to be very positive about what transpires within its frontiers, but it is not presumptuous to say that death, in God's universe of light and life, is not the supreme and all-controlling power.

With a sense of utter inadequacy I have approached this subject. No one lives long without realizing its difficulty, and no one who has any sense of the awfulness of sin will be willing to be dogmatic. The boundaries of knowledge are quickly reached. It is folly to dogmatize about infinity and eternity. It is such a terrible thing to be a sinner that no one would willingly utter one word which would diminish in the least the awful sanctions by which wrong-doing is surrounded.

Whatever else may be thought to be true, this surely is beyond question : processes of restoration, however loving the motive behind them, will not work to their end until the last vestige of evil desire has been eliminated. What ages of suffering that may require ! How slowly the forces of righteousness achieve their results in the sphere in which observation is possible ! How long a time will be needed to purge the man of all his animal-

isms, his selfishness, his pride and vain ambition, and make him like unto the typical man, we cannot tell ; but this we do know, that, on the hypothesis that punishment is always disciplinary, the time which will elapse before the best of the children of men will reach the stature of the fullness of Christ will be so long and the process so painful that no one would dare to make it an excuse for wrong-doing.

It is difficult enough to imagine how long it will be before the saints of the earth will enter into their heritage. What the rebellious, the traitors, and the proud will require of terrible and long-continued discipline must give us pause.

I conclude by recapitulating the points which I have endeavored to treat reverently, as I surely have treated them earnestly, in this chapter.

Both Scripture and reason indicate that everywhere and forever wrong-doing will be attended by suffering.

But that suffering is not the expression of vengeance ; it is the means which the Eternal Father, according to a beneficent purpose, uses to create in His children a hatred of evil, and to bring them to realize His Fatherhood and their sonship. These processes of discipline will continue, if need be, for ages of ages, until the brute inheritance has disappeared and there is left nothing but pure

spirit, naturally able to choose the evil, but morally so absorbed and occupied with right and truth as to make it practically unconscious that there is a possibility of anything but conformity to love.

Will any forever resist that discipline? We know not ; but from what we do know of man and God, it is difficult to understand how any can be willing to do so when the fullness of the Divine glory is revealed.

The possibility, I must admit ; the probability, I doubt. But whatever the possibilities, when there is no clear word of revelation to the contrary, it is always not only our privilege, but our duty to hope for the best. And we do hope that somehow good will be the final goal ; that not one life will be destroyed or cast as rubbish to the void ; that somehow and some time, God will make the human pile complete, and bring all men to the fullness of the stature of His Son our Elder Brother ; and we believe that this hope has a basis in reason, in Scripture, and in the moral nature of man ; and that its full realization will be the consummation of the Kingdom of God, the coronation of the Lamb, and the glorification of our redeemed humanity.

XI

THE IMMORTAL LIFE

OTHER questions are quite as mysterious and difficult of answer as that which concerns the presence and meaning of death, but no inquiry is quite so constant and imperative. A helpful book by a recent writer has for its title, "The Place of Death in Evolution."¹ Its object is to show that from every point of view, except that of human feelings, death is beneficent. But notwithstanding our theories on this subject, the fact remains that in all ages death has been regarded as the most constant, if not the most perplexing of mysteries. In the last analysis there is really only one great problem in the universe, but it is a problem with many factors, and includes suffering, sorrow, sin, and death. Human faculties are so limited that the factors quickly become exaggerated into separate problems. The attitude of men toward death has always been substantially the same. This is evident from the history of the earliest times and, also, from the art of the most ancient nations. There have been

¹ Newman Smythe, D. D.

progress and change in other things, but none in the general feeling of the race toward death. As exceptional individuals become more spiritual, they are able to face it more intelligently and calmly ; but the inquiry as to its place in the universe is eager and world-wide, and earnest thinkers to-day are as much puzzled by the mystery of death as when the first man first looked upon the lifeless form of his brother man. There are three ways in which this subject is commonly approached, and they are typical, not only of present thought, but of what it always has been.

The majority of people regard death as the most to be dreaded of conceivable events. It is an enemy. Art pictures it as a hideous fiend, who advances brandishing his ghastly spear, or as one of the Fates, whose remorseless shears cut the thread of life. Its symbol is a skull and crossbones. No light attends its presence. A few who feel more intensely than they think, philosophically and with some effort, speak of it simply as the end of life. Others in despair because of present suffering seek it as a sure way of escape from the ills which seem too hard to be borne. But the number who dream that it offers possible relief is small. Even in this nineteenth century, after all the influence of civilization, discovery, and religion, the common feeling concerning death is one of utmost and horrible dread.

Another class, and a far smaller one, is composed of the few scholars who study it scientifically. Theoretically they regard it as an incident in universal evolution. That their personal feelings about it are different from those of the more ignorant does not follow, although because they are usually intelligent and strong, they more frequently exercise self-control. They find death in all spheres which they try to explore ; it is found in the vegetable world and in the animal world as well as in that inhabited by humanity. From contact with it they become hardened to it. They resemble the Stoics in imperturbability, but they are human, and as anxious as any others to know whether death ends all.

Another and still smaller group has cultivated the spirit of the Stoics. They have disciplined themselves so that they are able to face whatever comes with equanimity. This explains how some who are without Christian faith, who deny the existence of God and the future life, pass from the earth apparently with all the heroism and calmness of saints. They have learned to control their emotions rather than to rise above them ; but feeling is not dead even where it is subdued. Fires that burn inwardly often burn most intensely. Those who have learned to accept the inevitable do so with as good a grace as possible, though their dread

of its mystery may be as intense as that of others who are more demonstrative.

To all alike the outlook is sad and without hope. Life has been a joy, but its end is desolation. The beautiful statue has been carved with infinite care into a figure of exquisite grace only to be broken into pieces at the last, and why — who can understand? The great dome has been lifted into the air in order that it might fall into ruins when finished. The beneficence of a law which works toward well-being in far distant years, but sacrifices individuals on the way, offers poor compensation for those whose hearts are breaking with what they are bearing or dreading.

Nothing more distinctly characterized the teachings of Jesus than what may be called the New Way of Regarding Death. new way of looking at suffering and at death which was introduced by Him. He taught that suffering is not positive evil; but that it is a step toward blessing. It is never either ordered or permitted as an end in itself, but in the hands of God it is used as a chisel is used in the hands of a sculptor. If the marble could speak, it would protest against the sculptor's blows, as our human hearts rebel at the processes by which we are disciplined into grace and beauty. Death is never mentioned by Christ as an enemy, but rather as a sleep, a change from one room to another in the

Father's house. Paul speaks of the "last enemy," but it is of an enemy vanquished and of a victory won. To his vision death goes out of sight in the glory that is being revealed. The Christian view of death is different from any which the world had known before. There is a positive note in all the teaching of Jesus on this subject. He does not paint it in attractive colors ; and consequently offers no motive for suicide ; but He always speaks of it as rest and relief, as a change which works blessing, as something analogous to the recreating changes experienced in the body. After sleep comes the awaking. That which seems worst ends best. What we call death is only transition.

But the words of Jesus, and the influence of His life and teachings for well-nigh two thousand years, have made comparatively little difference with the way this subject is regarded by the mass of men. They face the mystery with terror ; they watch the approach of the enemy with indefinable and awful anticipations. However interpreted, and whatever the theory of its mission in the universe, even where the element of terror is most largely eliminated, it is the supreme crisis toward which thought tends and concerning which inquiry never ceases. What is it ? Is it an end, or only a means ? Is it an abyss, or a bridge over an abyss ? Is it a great darkness, or a door into in-

finite light? There are many ways of answering these questions, all of them of more or less value.

There is the voice of nature. Nature is not without suggestions of something brighter beyond the grave. Summer follows win-^{The Many Witnesses.}ter. The birds go, but they come again. The flowers fade, but it is only in order that they may bloom in fresher beauty. The stalks of grain seem to die, but they leave their seeds for other harvests in future years. One generation after another passes away, but new generations succeed. That which seems to end in decay rises again in glorious strength. Death has a large place in the universe, but always that of ministering to life. To the individual, nature may prophesy little that is encouraging, but with a sure voice she presages the immortality of the race. The individual falls—the race goes on. In this fact is contained a prediction of the indestructibility of life. In one form of existence life may disappear, but it only waits to reappear in another form. This may give little hope to you and to me, since it seems to indicate that the race alone is immortal. But it is much to find that life in its essence is indestructible. To that fact nature bears abundant witness.

Rising above the natural world, we come to the common aspiration and longing of humanity. What that is may be learned from consciousness,

and from the experience of the race as it is recorded in history, literature, and art. The universal dread of death is a witness to the love of life. No person ever really longs to die. Relief from suffering or limitation is desired, and, to achieve that end, death may be sought, but only as a means of escape from some nearer evil. If that object could be realized in other and better ways, death would always be shunned. "If a man die, shall he live again?" is more than an inquiry; it is a testimony. It bears witness to faith in the permanence of conscious being.

This witness appears in another and more impressive form in the literature of the world. Through all its manifold creations runs the deathless aspiration for immortality.

And what is true of literature is also true of art. The delicately carved mausoleums of Greece, the mighty pyramids of Egypt, the rude platforms of poles on which the American Indians place their dead, show that men of all classes in all times and all lands have coveted life. They have not only loved it, but have believed in its immortality. The story of the death of Socrates is typical. The philosopher could never have taught such sublime truths, if millions of others in humbler spheres had not held the same faith. He was the flower of all the past of Greece and of the world. Great men are

like plants which blossom but once in a century. Into their intellectual and spiritual fibre have entered the thought and achievements of hundreds and thousands who have lived before them. A century flower is not the blossom of one stalk alone, but of thousands and millions which have converged to the same point. Plato was not one man alone, but the efflorescence of a race. So was Job, so was Dante, so were Milton, Browning, Tennyson, and a glorious choir of other singers whose music has been keyed to resurrection and life.

The witness of consciousness as it has spoken in literature and as it speaks in those who live to-day is supported by the common teaching of philosophy and religion. Philosophy may be likened to a sphere with its two poles — one turning toward God, the other toward immortality. In every age and every land these have been the dominant questions. Does one ask as to reality? The question instantly goes back to the Ultimate Reality. Does another seek the meaning of life? Instantly he faces the question, Does life really or only apparently end at the grave? These are the supreme subjects of philosophy, and in this case that definite particle "the" should be written very large. The answer has been given in different ways. It sometimes seems as if there were no personal God in Buddhism; and in one sense

there is not—in another there is. There are many sects of Buddhists. Some believe that behind the seen is only universal and impersonal law; most if not all the sects agree that that law sometimes manifests itself in a conscious and beneficent being. The Buddhists look forward either to Nirvana, which is a state of absorption in God, or to the Western Paradise, in which conscious existence continues. The Hindus have a doctrine that they call Karma. The individual seems to die; but all that he was in his essential and spiritual nature is deathless. Whether we examine the religions of Greece, of Rome, of Persia, of India, or of later times, we find in one degree and another, in one form and another, something which may truly be called faith in God and in life beyond the grave. These voices of nature, of the soul of man, of history, of literature, of philosophy, of religion, are strangely and beautifully confirmed by the latest word of modern science. At first it was thought that evolution necessitated atheism and infidelity. It has frequently been denounced as the substitution of law for a personal God. That is not its final word. As step by step it has pushed from one sphere into another, in a nameless way, it has been found to confirm the teachings of humanity and of Christianity. It suggests the inquiry where the seed of progress

which was sown in the primeval fire-mist came from. The beautiful civilization of the ages cannot be the result of chance, but must be the realization of an intelligent plan. Thus evolution points backward to One who planted in the fire-mist the seeds of progress and civilization. The study of life even in its lower forms shows that the principle of sacrifice runs through all gradations of being; that it begins in the very lowest, reaches on toward the highest, and then culminates. Evolution gives a new meaning to the text which speaks of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" and to that other one which beholds in the midst of the splendor of the throne the Lamb, which is the eternal symbol of sacrifice. Evolution not only points toward God and sacrifice, but it cannot be completed without a longer period than the threescore and ten existence of man. It prophesies a grander destiny for our race than the grave. That which has been countless ages in perfecting cannot be "cast as rubbish to the void." Human life may have had its beginnings in the physical, but it must end in the spiritual. This is the latest word of evolutionary science. Like prophets, its teachers stand with their faces toward the future, with expectancy and hope unsurpassed even in the prophets of religion.

They say, "Evolution . . . seems to be through

with the body, when it has fairly begun with the soul. It has reached in our selfhood, conscious of its continuous identity, a new realm or order of existence ; it has crossed the threshold, and stands as a child of the Eternal in the Father's presence. The same self-conscious being who preserves his moral identity through the incessant changes of the molecular processes with which his life is connected in this body, has already reached a point of spiritual independence, although not yet of complete detachment from atomic matter ; that detachment, with possibility of new and better connection with the elemental forces, may be the last possible step in the evolution of the soul, — the last transformation which is the beginning of the end and the possession of the final glory of life.”¹

This chorus of voices confirms the teaching of Jesus when He said that death was only sleep, or a change from one room to another in the infinite house of God. When we take narrow views, we may think there is little evidence for belief in continuance of being, but larger vision makes it difficult to doubt that life is a stream which no barriers can forever obstruct. They may deflect its course for a moment, but the stream broadens and deepens, and its sweep is onward and endless.

There are two ways by which Christians may

¹ *The Place of Death in Evolution*, Smythe, pp. 109, 110.

approach this subject. One is the direct, and the other the indirect. The direct is that afforded by the teachings of our Lord, and by the significance of His resurrection. At this time I am concerned solely with what may be called the indirect teaching of Christianity concerning the immortal life ; and I turn now to ask, What light does a rational interpretation of the instinct of Fatherhood cast on the inquiry, What lies beyond the grave?

I must recur to some principles which I believe have already been well established. The doctrine of Divine Fatherhood shows that Fatherhood and Immortality. God and man are of essentially the same nature. That does not mean that they are identically the same beings. Identity of nature does not imply identity of being. Every child is identical in nature with his father, and yet every child has an individuality peculiarly his own. The doctrine of the Fatherhood teaches that men and the Father who gave them being are partakers of the same nature. That does not mean merely that there are resemblances, but that in essence the natures are one. A child may differ in a thousand ways from his parents, and yet be the continuation of them in another generation. The vine is one, the nature of the vine and the branches is the same, but the branches and the vine are not the same.

If God and man have identically the same nature,

then the inference is inevitable that man will live as long as God. The human body dies ; it is essential to the thought of God that He never dies. The body is only the dress ; the real being is the spirit dwelling within. If God could die, there would be no God. If His children possess His being, they must also possess His immortality. Either the premise must be denied, or the conclusion must be accepted.

But another inference from this doctrine is equally explicit. Fatherhood necessitates the continuance of the relation between parent and child. If that relation endures, then man must live, not in a diffused and impalpable immensity, but as the child of God ; not as a mere impersonal emanation which is at last to be absorbed into His infinity, but as an eternal person. The thought that man is an emanation from God ; that he came out from Him as a ray of light from the sun, and that at last he will be absorbed in the universal glory, as the ray is absorbed in the splendor that fills the universe, was common in the elder philosophies and in some form of the elder religions, but it is a thing of the past. If that teaching were true, we should have no existence of our own. God is the Father, therefore men are His children. Childhood means individuality, and individuality must continue as long as the relation between the parent and the

child continues. If God is the everlasting Father, then man is His everlasting child.

If man is the everlasting child of the everlasting Father, then throughout all the ages that are before him he will possess the quali-

Personality
endures.

ties of personality, which is all that distinguishes him as in the image of God. < A person is a being who is self-conscious, intelligent, has the power of choice and of love. >

nature
of God

If we could multiply intelligence, the power of choice and of love, to absolute perfection, we should have the truest possible conception of God. Since man is the child of God, he will possess the qualities of personality so long as that relation continues. It is these qualities which make us ourselves. Our bodies change; they are reconstructed every year; not one atom is the same to-day as when we were children, and yet we are identically the same. Identity is a matter of spirit rather than of body. Identity persists even though the body is entirely new, and we cannot believe that it is affected by the last great change when the body finally decays. What we know and love in one another is something within the phenomenal, something spiritual. Tennyson has said: "Eternal form from form divides," but that is a form of spirit or personality rather than of matter. We love the face of our friend, but still more we love the spirit that is behind the face,

which illuminates it, and which manifests itself in intelligent choice and service. In short, that which is dear is the nature of which the body is but the dress. That is not simply the All, but something individual and personal. If that individuality continues, as the fact of the Divine Fatherhood necessitates, then the old inquiry as to whether we shall know one another beyond the grave has a logical and necessary answer. What we know now is not so much matter as spirit, form as character, and what will be recognized then will be spirit freed from existing limitations.

If once the Fatherhood of God is accepted, these conclusions are inevitable. If we can repeat the words of the creed, "I believe in God the Father Almighty," it will be but a short and easy path to another confession, equally far-reaching and comforting, "I believe in the life everlasting."

The message of Fatherhood to the race is one of hope and of blessing. It finds the world in the midst of sadness and dread expectancy. The very people who ought to be marching in the foremost files of all that is good and true are constantly involved in pitiful and disappointing controversies. Many of those who bear the name of Christian face the mysteries of existence with as little confidence as those who have never heard or read one word of the Christian revelation. Millions

A Message
of Hope.

sing that Christ is risen, who forget that death has lost its sting and the grave its victory. Fatherhood speaks with a loud and commanding voice, and its message is something like this: "You should trust the witness of nature concerning the deathlessness of being; you should give heed to the witness of consciousness and the voice of history; you should listen carefully to every accent of those who have pondered these problems in other days, for they are all broken rays of the true light which reveals immortality. You should study the revelations which have come to other people with other forms of religion, for they were not given in vain, and are not without their value as evidence concerning the things of the spirit. You should give earnest attention to the voice of the Christ, for He spoke out of the heart of the Eternal, affirming resurrection and continuance of being." Nature and consciousness, literature and religion, philosophy and science, and most of all the direct teaching of the Christ, are confirmed by the fact of the Fatherhood, which points toward life reaching into other spheres. If the Father is immortal, the child must also be immortal. The one point upon which our emphasis is now placed, and which rises in the darkness of our midnight like a splendid star, is this, Fatherhood necessitates immortal life.

The suggestions of this subject are many and full of inspiration. In "that endless progression

in far-off years," the seeds of blessing sown by

Suggestions
by the Sub-
ject.

heroic souls, the self-sacrifice, and the service of those who have lived and died

for love's sake will grow and bear fruit. What

the harvest will be, we dare not even predict; but

it will be far more glorious than anything of which

we have dreamed on the earth. The children of

God in the infinite palace of the Father, continu-

ing their lives, free yet choosing holiness and love,

— this is the hint of a glory of which it is auda-

cious to try clearly to think. Of this, however, we

may be perfectly sure: Fatherhood teaches us that

some time conflicts in homes, between classes, and

among nations will disappear; that some time the

war drum will throb no more, and the battle flag

will be furled; that, probably, the veil between

the seen and the unseen will be rent, but whether

rent or not, that those who have come to a reali-

zation of their sonship will grow forever and for-

ever toward the perfection of Him who will be ever

approached, but never can be fully reached. In

this we believe; for this we work and pray; toward

this we constantly press; for this we wait until the

day dawn in which there shall be disclosed to our

wondering vision at least a little more of the height

and depth, the greatness and the glory, of what is

implied and necessitated by the teaching of our

Lord concerning the Fatherhood of God and the

unending life of man.

XII

THE TEACHER FOR ALL AGES

JESUS was the child of narrowness and provincialism, and yet He was neither narrow nor provincial. He never traveled, nor studied in the schools ; so far as we know, He could speak but one language ; and after His childhood, He was never out of the country of His birth. His life was passed between Galilee and Judea. He belonged not only to a small part of the world, but to a short period of history. He was hardly thirty-three years of age when "He went into His glory on the sweep of an irresistible and fatal tide." And yet this peasant, with little knowledge of the world, with no scholastic learning, who died at the age when most really begin to live, has been the teacher of civilization for two thousand years. Others have influenced philosophy or science, He has identified religion with His own name. This requires an explanation, and it is not difficult to find. It was something for which he distinctly provided.

The remark of Renan that Jesus has identified

religion with Christianity was profound and true. He belonged to Judea and to one time, but He has embodied in His teaching the essence of all faiths of all time, so that it is difficult to imagine how Christianity can ever be surpassed. Another profound remark of the usually not too profound Frenchman is, "His worship grows young without ceasing." That also is true, and the secret of the eternal youth of Christianity is found in the teaching of Jesus concerning the Holy Spirit. This is one of the most practical of truths. It has long been my belief that if any one Christian doctrine could be called more fundamental than another, it is that of the Holy Spirit.

The teacher for all ages! No mere man could be so related to the swiftly changing centuries. The noblest masters have passed to their rest to be succeeded by others. Zoroaster, Buddha, Mahomet all left the world better than they found it. Their teachings will not soon be forgotten, but the men no longer have vital power. No man in the flesh can teach all ages and lands. The objects of knowledge change. The world of one decade is not like that of another. No one person can keep pace with the years. What is true of a man is also true of a book. We misunderstand the teaching even of our Bible. It has power because it is vitalized

No Man the
Contemporary
of all
Ages.

by the Spirit of God. Letters written to little churches in Asia two thousand years ago, to people secluded from civilization, before the discoveries of science, could not contain in detail all that is needed of ethics and religion in this century. We not only live on a different continent, but in a different world from the Romans and Galatians. We think about different things, and speak in different tongues. Words change their meaning. Language is like a river; it receives the contributions of thousands of rivulets. Languages to-day are very different from what they were one century ago, and still more unlike those of twenty centuries ago. New subjects necessitate new words. Books may contain principles applicable to all time, and that is what constitutes the surpassing excellence of our New Testament. }

But even principles have to be interpreted.
 How may we be sure that we are correct The Living Christ. in our understanding of them? An infallible principle requires an infallible interpreter before it can teach infallible truth. No *man* can be a teacher for all ages, and no *book*, apart from its interpreter, can mean the same to all time. The teacher for all ages must be a personal spirit. Jesus said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." That is, the man of one age must give place to the Spirit who is for all time. Jesus said

in substance: "When I disappear from your sight I will continue my work. I will be to you exactly the same that I have been in the flesh, except that now you see me by the physical eye and then you will see by the Spirit's eye. Have I been a teacher of truth? I will guide you into all truth. Have I been your helper? When great burdens press upon you, and sorrows come in like a flood, you will realize the truth of my words: 'Lo! I am with you alway.' Have I lifted you out of sin and brought you into the family of God? In better ways, and with greater power, the same service will continue forever." Jesus Christ is the Teacher for all ages, because he is alive forevermore in the Spirit.

It is sometimes said that it would be easy to follow Christ if we could see Him as His disciples saw Him. He is nearer to us than He was to them. Did He heal diseases? He heals them now. Did He enter into human suffering with a fullness which could be hinted at only by death? He is in the midst of the same great sacrifice to-day. The work of salvation did not begin on Calvary, and did not end there. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.

↳ To this truth Jesus frequently referred, and it needs emphasis in these times. We are told by some, who should know better, that the dead hand

of the past is upon us ; that there is no room for progress in Christianity. History proves that untrue. Limited at first by paganism, it has broken its limitations and grown toward purity. A seed falls into a crevice of the rocks on the Sierras. It must force its way upward and send its roots downward by rending rocks asunder. It will not show its results in one year, or many years. So the teachings of Christ have grown into the life of humanity. They have been misconstrued in almost every age, because their realization has been so difficult ; but to-day they are better understood and more widely appreciated than ever before.

Progress in
Christian
Thought.

We were not intended to remain intellectually stationary. Are we not the disciples of Jesus ? Yes ; but not so much of the Jesus who was on the earth as of the Christ who is living now. He is the Christ of New York, of London, of India, and of Africa ; the Christ who, in the Spirit, is leading the world toward better things. Let us understand. If He could speak to us, Jesus would say : " I am as near to you as I was to Peter and James and John. I am leading you. I am to you all that I was to them. Think of them ; but as they followed me in the flesh, so do you follow me in the Spirit."

Our life is not that of peasants in the hill coun-

try of Palestine. What a different world! Continents have been discovered. Science has explored the mysteries. The constellations have a language. Nations are tied together. There is a unity of interest now of which there was then no anticipation. When the missionary enterprise was started, early in the century, the greater part of the world was asleep: now it thrills with life. We send missionaries to the Orient; it sends missionaries to us. China is as near to London now as then Jerusalem was to Damascus. What shall we believe in these times when the heavens are read like an open book; when the stars are finding voices; when the hidden spaces of the earth are found to be written all over with records of the past; when people from every land jostle on almost every street; when thought is no longer symbolized by rills with mountains between them, but by an ocean into which all the rivers flow? Shall we go back to that little hill country and to eighteen hundred years ago for the final article of belief? If we did that, we should find something which has never been transcended. Whittier never wrote anything truer than the following from his "Questions of Life:" —

"I gather up the scattered rays
Of wisdom in the early days,
Faint gleams and broken, like the light
Of meteors in a northern night,

Betraying to the darkling earth
 The unseen sun which gave them birth ;
 I listen to the sibyl's chant,
 The voice of priest and hierophant ;
 I know what Indian Kreeshna saith,
 And what of life and what of death
 The demon taught to Socrates ;
 And what, beneath his garden-trees
 Slow-pacing, with a dreamlike tread,
 The solemn-thoughted Plato said ;
 Nor lack I tokens, great or small,
 Of God's clear light in each and all,
 While holding with more dear regard
 The scroll of Hebrew seer and bard,
 The starry pages promise-lit
 With Christ's Evangel over-writ,
 Thy miracle of life and death,
 O Holy One of Nazareth ! "

But, after all, what makes that teaching a miracle in the midst of the ages is its adjustment to all time. The source of authority is not in something said or done eighteen hundred years ago, but in a personal teacher who is active now. Jesus in effect said: "Remember that as I lead you now, so I will lead men beneath the expanding horizons, and in the midst of the ferment of thought and the bewildering claims upon loyalty, in still later days." Our Teacher is the same that Peter and James and John had. He may repeat the very words that He spoke to them, or He may have other messages. "What is the

Truth to be
 adjusted to
 Various
 Times.

true relation of man to man? Shall I read what Jesus said to his disciples?" Yes. "Shall I take their interpretation?" They did not interpret. He must tell me what the principle means when applied to the life of to-day. Did He say, "Love one another as I have loved you"? That means something different for an employer of labor in the nineteenth century from what it meant for the fisherman to whom it was spoken. Did He say, "I am the truth"? That meant one thing to those who heard it; it means something different to those before whom the spaces and the silences have been opened. Did He say, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's"? That meant one thing when Augustus was on the throne; it meant something different twenty-five years ago in the American and Swiss republics; and it means something still different in these days of democracy and socialism. Now the people are Cæsar. Did Jesus say, "Resist not evil"? How shall those words be interpreted in Armenia, in Cuba, and on the Philippine Islands? The problem of duty is constantly changing.

The New Testament contains principles which
 The Teacher have to be interpreted and applied to
 needed
 To-day. the conditions of the new time. The
 Teacher is needed to-day quite as much as two

thousand years ago. The expansion of life, the more generous treatment of man by man, the amelioration of laws, the annihilation of tyrannies, the bringing in of the rule of the people, show that the Spirit is not only interpreting truth, but that He is the actual leader of events. "How shall I be a Christian?" Follow Him. "But follow whom — Jesus of Nazareth?" No; follow the living Christ who, in the ways of the Spirit, makes known so clearly that none need misunderstand what is right, what is duty, and what is truth. "But may we carry it still further, and say that Christ is saving men now as when on the earth?" Yes. The work of Jesus of Nazareth was completed; the work of the Spirit will not be completed until the triumph of truth and love. In every age men have been convicted of sin, led from evil ways, and helped toward a realization of their sonship. It has been as distinctly the result of the Spirit's touch as the healing of the leper was the result of the touch of the hand of Jesus. The Spirit now says, "Follow," as distinctly as any voice spoke to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Those who heed are led from vice and selfishness toward love and holiness. The Christ in the Spirit is doing exactly the same works to-day that He did when He was on the earth. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

What Jesus was during His earthly career, God had been in the past and will be in the future, — the Helper, the Teacher and the Saviour.

The most conclusive evidences of Christianity are not ancient wonders. Why should I offer the resurrection of Lazarus, as the chief proof of the power which is leading in the transformation of the world to-day, to those who have seen men dead in sin raised to hope, purity, and love? Why should I repeat the story of Jairus' daughter while in these days cures quite as wonderful are worked by the power of God? Why should I go to the story of Jesus walking on the water, when the whole development of science shows that there is a power behind visible things which, if properly used, is as wonderful as that manifested by Him? Properly understood, the whole progress of the world — its steamships, its telegraphs, its telephones, its X-rays — exhibits supernatural power. The age of miracles has not passed. As the race approaches the stature of Christ, it is better able to do the things which He did. Growth into the life of the Spirit means growth into power over nature. It does not mean the abolition of the physical, but superiority to it. Tennyson had the vision of a prophet when he wrote of "the crowning race : " —

“Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge ; under whose command
Is earth and earth's, and in their hands
Is nature like an open book.”

“Is there any evidence which warrants belief in any spiritual leadership of the race?” Spiritual Leadership of the Race.
I reply: Have you ever thought of the meaning of the steady and constant conflict between truth and error, selfishness and love? Why does truth crushed to earth always rise; and love never weary in its battle against vice and sin? Generations come and go, and men and women, perfectly conscious that they will lay down their lives in a forlorn struggle, take up the work and carry it on. It is not because of what they see, for that is all against them; it is not because of what they can gain, for they will gain little except suffering and death; they do it because they have heard a spiritual voice calling them to the higher levels. Wherever, unappreciated and alone, men or women are striving for the better time, there are sure evidences of the presence of the Spirit.

In proportion as we realize Christ's power we do not need to go back to Galilee and Judea; we do not need to traverse the centuries — we need only to keep our hearts pure, our minds open, our spirits reverent, and there will come to us visions of truth and right, of duty and service, as splendid

and inspiring as ever came to saint or sage in earlier days. We read and revere the story of the Master who lived and died so many years ago ; it is the sweetest story ever written ; but we must not forget His words : " It is expedient for you that I go away." He did not wish his disciples to think too much of Him as He was then. He wished them to understand that He belonged to all time, and that those who would live in the long, long future would have the same great Teacher. The name he then assumed was the " Spirit of Truth." If instead of calling ourselves Christians we desired only to be followers of the Spirit of Truth, we should be known by a name quite as appropriate as at present.

We live our lives in littleness and weariness, in discouragement, and sometimes in despair ; we think we know nothing and can do nothing ; one is ignorant and another is sick ; one is poor and another has no friends ; but all alike have the same great Teacher. Above the peasant in the fields, the miner deep in the earth, the sick not able to leave their beds, the statesman burdened with the affairs of nations, the scientist exploring the mysteries of the earth and the stars, is one and the same Spirit, leading all in different paths but ever toward the one great end, — the life which was in Jesus Christ, the love which is God, and

which will fill the earth with the Kingdom of God. The hearts of the disciples burned within them as they walked by the way, and those who are pure, who love the truth, and who would rather suffer loss than do wrong, may be sure that the same presence is walking beside them, and that some time and in some way they will realize the greatness of these words, "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you."

¹ John xiv. 26.

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